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AUTHOR Busching, Beverly
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ABSTRACT

The broad context of curriculum planning, staff development, and administrative decision making is the focus of this handbook for developing school writing programs. The guidelines and activities included in this handbook are meant to be suggestive; the ideas presented in this handbook will, in most cases, need to be shaped to suit the circumstances and needs of the local site. This handbook presents practical assistance based on the experience of a variety of school districts, large and small, rural and urban. The handbook describes a change process that continues over an extended period of time, since the approach taken assumes that in most cases a development project will involve major changes in both curriculum and instruction. Chapter titles include: (1) "How students learn to write"; (2) "Development of writing programs"; (3) "Evaluation of writing; (4) "Writing in content subjects"; and (5) "Conclusion." (Forty-eight figures are included; and a seven-page bibliography is attached.) (RS)

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Handbook For Developing School Writing Programs

by Beverly Busching
University of South Carolina

March 1989

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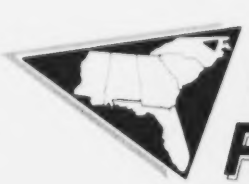

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1: How Students Learn To Write

The ocean was rough as the storm quickly gained on the boat. The fishermen had been out for a few days; and at four o'clock in the afternoon of the final day, they were loading up to go in. Pulling in the net of yellowfin tuna, the tired fishermen brought in more porpoises than usual. Exhausted and overly anxious to get home, they pulled in the net, porpoises and all. Eighteen porpoises had to pay with their lives for the fishermen's long, tiring week.... **Anne Scalapino, high school student (Moffett, 1987)**

Anne is a fortunate young woman, able to express her beliefs with clarity and force. Across the country, a surge of interest in writing has produced many classrooms where writers like Anne are practicing the craft of writing and enjoying their growth as literate communicators.

Students who graduate from school today will enter a world of writing. Computer hookups speed the exchange of messages back and forth between offices and even continents many times in a day. I see signs of this intensified literacy in my own community as I stand in line at the local copy shop behind officers of community organizations getting copies of official-looking messages written on their home computers.

We realize that many students in school today are poorly prepared for an intensely literate society. We see their inadequate written work every day, and large-scale writing assessment programs substantiate what we see in our own schools. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (1986) writing proficiency tests in 1983 and 1984 showed that:

- Most students were unable to write adequately except in response to the simpliest of tasks. Only 12 percent of eighth graders and 19.4 percent of the eleventh graders performed at even adequate levels of performance in persuasive writing tasks. Eleventh graders did better on informative writing tasks: 38 percent wrote at an adequate level.
- Students of all ages had difficulty with analytic writing. Even on the easiest task, which asked students to "compare and contrast," only 25 percent of the eleventh graders, 18 percent of the eighth graders, and 2 percent of the fourth graders wrote adequate analyses.
- Students' positive attitudes toward writing deteriorated steadily across the grades. In grade four, 57 percent of the students reported that they like to write. This fell to 39 percent by the eleventh grade.

What Research Says

Two decades of intensive research in the teaching of writing have yielded a knowledge base, tentative though some of it is, to support theories of composition instruction that are far more useful to practitioners than were the speculative theories of the past. Researchers set out to determine what is involved in the act of writing in elementary and secondary classrooms, producing studies of planning, of writing production factors, of revision, of the effects of teacher response, and, especially, of writing apprehension and its damaging effects.

Hillocks (1987), in a major review of approximately 2,000 studies of writing instruction, found that the elements of effective writing instruction are quite different from what has been commonly practiced in schools. Typically, writing instruction has been modeled after the editing processes of publishing houses.

Teachers defined the task, set the due date, and evaluated and corrected the final product. In this model of writing instruction, teachers dominated all writing activity, with students acting as the passive recipients of rules, advice, and examples of good writing.

But Hillocks found that what works well in the publishing house is not what is needed by growing writers. This presentational mode of teaching was the least effective of several instructional models, less effective even than a **process** model, which emphasized students involved in writing with little or no guidance or instruction.

The most effective mode of instruction, which Hillocks calls **environmental**, provided a combination of composing experiences with high levels of student involvement and specifically planned activities to assist students in acquiring needed knowledge about writing:

- Students writing about subjects that interest them.
- Involving students in problem-solving activities that provide practice of skills that will be used later in writing.
  These structured problem-solving activities are planned to enable students to deal with similar problems when they are composing. They are very different from the fill-in-the-blank exercises in most English books, which have very little relationship to the decisions that writers must make while writing.
- Building more complex sentences from simpler ones, including sentence combining.
- Using scales, criteria, and specific questions that students apply to their own or others' writing.

Students regularly examine their own writing and the writing of others in the light of explicitly stated criteria. Using the criteria systematically encourages students to internalize them and use them in writing even when they do not have the criteria in front of them. The study of grammar (parts of speech and sentence structure) had little or no effect on raising the quality of student writing. In fact, taught in certain ways, grammar and mechanics instruction had a negative effect on student writing. Similarly, in some programs, a heavy emphasis on mechanics and usage (i.e., marking every error) resulted in significant losses in overall quality during the period of time of the study.

This finding was so consistent across many classrooms that Hillocks issues the following warning to educators:

School boards, administrators, and teachers who impose the systematic study of traditional school grammar on their students over lengthy periods of time in the name of teaching writing do them a great disservice which should not be tolerated by anyone concerned with the effective teaching of good writing. We

need to learn to teach standard usage and mechanics after careful task analysis and with minimal grammar (pp. 248-249).

After several years of instructional development, teachers from all grade levels (including middle school) at Boothbay Elementary School, Boothbay, ME, summarized what they had learned about environments for student writers in the seven principles presented in **Figure 1.1.**

Figure 1.1

Principles Of Teaching And Learning Writing From Boothbay Elementary School

1. Writers need regular chunks of time – time to think, write, confer, read, change their minds, and write some more. Writers need time they can count on, so even when they aren't writing, they're anticipating the time they will be. Writers need time to write well.

2. **Writers need their own topics**. Right from the first day of kindergarten, students should use writing as a way to think about and give shape to their own ideas and concerns.

3. **Writers need response**. Helpful response comes during – not after – the composing. It comes from the writer's peers and from the teacher, who consistently models the kinds of restatements and questions that help writers reflect on the content of their writing.

4. **Writers learn mechanics in context**, from teachers who address errors as they occur within individual pieces of writing, where these rules and forms will have meaning.

5. **Children need to know adults who write**. We need to write, share our writing with our students, and demonstrate what experienced writers do in the process of composing, letting our students see our own drafts in all their messiness and tentativeness.

6. **Writers need to read**. They need access to a wide-ranging variety of texts, prose and poetry, fiction, and nonfiction.

7. **Writing teachers need to take responsibility for their knowledge and teaching**. We must seek out professional resources that reflect the far-reaching conclusions of recent research into children's writing. And we must become writers and researchers, observing and learning from our own and our students' writing. Atwell, 1987

Current Practice in Teaching Writing

Based on what we are learning about student writers, many schools across the country have made changes in the classroom environment for teaching writing. Rather than a new approach to teaching writing, these changes are better characterized as a shift in emphasis from a prescriptive approach to a problem-solving approach. These changes can be summarized as follows:

Emphasis on the content of written products rather than form and mechanics

Effective writers have something to say that is of importance to them and to their intended audience. When the classroom gives too much emphasis to the skills of writing, students learn that what they have to say is of little importance, a lesson that is counterproductive in the workplace or higher education. When the content of writing becomes the center of attention, students want to reach their audience effectively, and, through their concern for effective communication, they learn about the organization, style, and mechanics of writing as meaningful tools of effective writers.

Emphasis on varied writing tasks

In recognition of the many different kinds of writing tasks in school and in real life, writing curricula now provide for inclusion of a wide variety of writing assignments, formal and informal, long and short, for many different purposes and audiences. Letters, research papers, journal entries, editorials, lab reports, short stories, personal narratives, memos, lyric poetry, and critical analysis—each requires its own appropriate form and style, which in turn require a unique set of student responses. Over time, students build a repertoire of language alternatives and an understanding of how to make appropriate decisions for the task at hand.

Emphasis on forms of writing that mirror real-world writing

In recent years, the English curriculum has undergone a movement away from an almost exclusive emphasis on narrowly defined academic writing to writing that works in the real world. The critical essay, the research paper, the five-paragraph theme, and the sonnet no longer rule the curriculum. The thesis statement, for example, now shares a place with "leads" that do more than establish the thesis or main idea. Students are encouraged to write leads in the fashion of newspaper and magazine writers, leads that establish a bond with the audience, leads that entertain, and leads that communicate the personal involvement of the author. College curricula are undergoing a similar broadening of the limits of academic writing, joining with public schools to provide a better preparation for both continued academic work and occupational writing tasks.

Emphasis on teaching the processes of writing

In order to write well, students need to learn more than what the final form of a composition should be. They need to know how to get from their initial half-formed thoughts to a clear, well-organized, effective, and correct written

product. Just as cooks need more than a picture and recipe for a loaf of bread and basketball players need more than a videotape of a game, the writer needs to know the processes of planning, drafting, revising, and editing that create an effective composition. And especially, like the basketball player, the writer needs frequent practice in school with supportive assistance in order to achieve usable mastery of these processes.

Emphasis on teaching form and mechanics in the context of students' writing

Recognizing the complexity and variability of writing tasks, teachers plan for problem-solving activities that will assist students in solving the many problems – content selection, organization, word choice, style, spelling – that they will face on their own as independent writers. Rather than presenting rules for written products, teachers present problems to be solved, helping students to find solutions that are appropriate for different writing tasks.

Emphasis on audience feedback

We talk because someone listens. We try to improve our communication because we want to interest or convince someone else who hears us. If a teacher continues to talk to her students even though they have left for lunch, everyone would conclude that something was seriously wrong with her mental condition. No one in his/her right mind would keep talking to an empty room. But isn't that what we have been asking student writers to do, day after day and year after year? Too often, we have expected them to write for no real purpose and no real audience, and, even more, we have expected them to work hard to improve their writing for no purpose and no real audience.

Now, in classrooms all over the country, students are sharing their writing in informal circles, filling bulletin boards and hallways with their writing, and binding their corrected work into books. One elementary school has a special collection of "rare books," which children check out with eager interest. Classes make collections of informational brochures to share with each other, each child contributing his or her expertise, from making peanut butter cookies to bass fishing. Older students write supplementary science texts for younger students, and classes in New York City exchange their life stories on-line with peers in South Carolina.

Only a small part of the audience for writing should be in the form of contests or competitive publication. All writers need audience response, not just the best writers, and beginning writers need here-and-now audiences that can give them feedback useful for continued growth. The response of an audience is the powerful stimulant that keeps the writer working, but it is also a powerful corrective when the message is not clear or convincing.

Emphasis on teachers in a coaching role

Traditionally, teachers were most active at the beginning and the end of the writing process. Now teachers play a very active role during writing itself, encouraging, supporting, and clarifying – as Donald Graves (1983) has said, helping writers "leapfrog over problems."

Coaching writing is not easy, as teachers who are experimenting with this new role have found out. It is hard to manage well the scarce time available for writing. Yet teachers have found ways to manage this new role effectively and are excited about the results in student writing and in the changed classroom atmosphere. One high school teacher reported, " Now I'm with them instead of against them."

A characteristic of a good coach is being a careful observer of the players, and writing teachers are learning to "learn from" their students, gradually coming to understand their preferred approaches to planning and drafting, their trouble spots, and their areas of expertise to share with others. Naturally, a large student load mitigates sensitive understanding of student writers, a problem that administrators will need to help teachers solve.

Emphasis on the classroom as a community of writers

When everybody in a classroom is practicing the craft of writing, writers can find many sources of encouragement and assistance. The positive energy of the collaborative group pulls along the reluctant

and the fearful writer. Peer assistance is efficient: students do not have to wait for the teacher for help.

Even more importantly, students begin to view themselves as people who are capable of solving writing problems. Especially among low-achieving students, this change in attitude can result in dramatic leaps in writing ability. When teachers join the class community as writers, sharing their plans, problems, and texts, they become more empathetic supporters of student writers and have the opportunity to model many important processes of writing.

Emphasis on integrating reading/literature and writing programs

Writing deserves separate attention as an important mode of communication. Yet, it is inevitable that once the writing program is well established, committed writing teachers will want closer ties with other parts of the English/language arts curriculum. Once teachers feel comfortable teaching writing, they will be ready to begin to create stronger connections between their reading and writing programs. Such connections are efficient, eliminating duplication of objectives. They also help students to apply what they have learned about writing to their reading; for example, applying insights about organizing their essays to comprehending informational reading material. Reading material, after all, is writing. And writing is **reading** for the audience that receives it.

Writers primarily learn about writing from what they read. For better or worse, the reading material that students are exposed to at home and at school plays a strong role in shaping their concepts of what is expected of them in writing. This influence is so strong that even two different basal reading programs with different levels of language complexity can influence students to write with simple levels of complexity, despite the students' potential ability as writers. In recent years, publishers have responded to this research by providing better and more varied models of writing in basal reading texts.

Schools must build their own richly varied reading programs, exposing students from the earliest years to the very best imaginative and informational literature. Without such a language base, even the most talented writing teachers will have little success in developing excellent writers.

Emphasis on writing to learn in all subjects

Writing is a valuable tool for thinking. Although students may sit passively during a lecture, when they put their own ideas on paper, the writing makes them active learners. Students who put their own summaries and analyses into written form remember more and integrate new material with previous learning. Journal entries about reactions to new concepts give teachers invaluable insight into the status of each student relative to the topic of the class. Each discipline has its own particular pattern of thinking and inquiry. Teachers have found many ways to use writing to assist learning – in mathematics problem-solving, in biological observations, and in artistic envisioning.

Emphasis on providing specific feedback to writers rather than grading written products

A grade gives students little information. It is not surprising that writers do not find grades a very useful tool for their learning. Although students may initially demand grades on their papers, they soon learn to value different kinds of feedback, from checklists of revising and editing criteria to conference discussions and audience comments. Teachers can thus be relieved of the burden of making overall evaluations of each paper and can concentrate on selected elements of writing that students are ready to learn.

Writing Processes

The task of transforming inner thoughts into appropriate written messages takes the writer through several phases of mental activity. These phases have been given various labels, but there is general agreement on an initial planning phase, a drafting phase, a phase of looking back at what was written, and a phase of final correction for a public audience. Donald Murray (1981) describes these phases in Figure 1.2

Observational studies of writers show that writers usually do not proceed through these phases in a linear fashion, one step at a time from beginning to end. Even when drafting, writers make small corrections in spelling and word choice, and a draft may be interrupted by major reshaping of the topic. Writers are constantly shuttling back and forth among the phases of writing as problems and opportunities present themselves (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986).

Additionally, each student approaches these processes in an individual manner. One student prefers to linger over the prewriting phase, making lists and charts, then swiftly drafts a text. In the next seat, another student begins to draft almost immediately, stopping frequently for extensive crossing out and adding on. Writers also react differently to various tasks. Some of them will enjoy poetry, starting to write with ease, but others will find this task difficult and need more time. A writing program should provide time for composing with built-in flexibility in processes and time schedules.

Developing writers benefit from the opportunity to concentrate on each one of these phases at a time. For example, students can shape and clarify topics better if they do not have to concentrate on the final form of the composition at the same time. Similarly, drafting goes more smoothly if questions about correctness of punctuation and spelling can be delayed until after the thoughts have been formulated.

The complexity of the writing task places a severe burden of problem solving on student writers. There is so much to remember, some of it only recently learned and difficult to retrieve even under the most supportive circumstances. If writers have to solve too many problems all at once, it seems that they respond by simplifying the task – in other words, creating simplified texts with easily constructed sentences and easily spelled words. Not willing to risk mistakes, they make little progress in improving their writing.

It is important to remember that there is no one best way to implement the phases of the writing process in the classroom. Sometimes the writing task will extend over several days or weeks. When middle-school students are writing research reports, the prewriting stage will be lengthy, as students collect and organize their information, trying to separate out important focusing ideas from supportive details. Similarly, a fourth grade class will need several weeks to write books for kindergarten children, surveying picture books for appropriate language and special design, developing topics and information, revising and editing carefully, and finally binding the books with decorative covers.

If students know a lot about their subject, all phases may be abbreviated. When they write in their journals, for example, prewriting occurs in brief snatches of time, out of school, when journals are passed out, and in the few seconds while the pencil is poised over the paper.

The circumstances of the school, such as schedules, faculty assignments, program goals, and teacher expertise, will also influence how the processes of writing are taught and scheduled into the school day. Whatever the approach, sustained time for composing on a frequent, regular basis must be provided.

Glatthorn (1981) presents a comparison of important differences identified in several reliable studies of skilled and unskilled writers (Figure 1.3). It is interesting that characteristics of unskilled writers, such as minimal revision, are also characteristics that have been observed in classrooms

where students are overloaded with too many demands at one time. In such cases, changes in the classroom environment for writing may encourage the "unskilled" writers to take more risks and begin to act like skilled writers who are constantly adding to their competence.

Figure 1.2
The Writing Process as Described by Donald Murray

The process through which the writer passes to produce an effective piece of writing will vary with the writer and the writing task, but this is the process through which most writers find it necessary to pass most of the time.

Prewriting

1. **Collect** – Writers know effective writing requires an abundant inventory of specific, accurate information. The information is collected through reading, interviewing, observing, remembering.

2. **Connect** – Meaning begins to be discovered as pieces of information connect and evolve into patterns of potential meaning. The writer plays with the relationships between pieces of information to discover as many patterns of meaning as possible.

3. **Rehearse** – In the mind and on paper, the writer follows language toward meaning. The writer will rehearse titles, leads, partial drafts, sections of a potential piece of writing to discover the voice and the form, which lead to meaning and which communicate that meaning.

Writing

4. **Draft** – The writer completes a discovery draft, usually written as fast as possible, often without notes, to find out what the writer knows and does not know, what works and does not work. The writer is particularly interested in what works because most effective writing is built from extending and reinforcing the positive elements in a piece of writing.

Rewriting

5. **Develop** – The writer explores the subject by developing each point through definition, description and, especially, documentation – which shows as well as tells the writer, and then the reader, what the piece of writing means. The writer usually has to add information to understand the potential meaning of the drafts and often has to reconstruct them.

6. Clarify – The writer anticipates and answers all the reader's questions. At this stage, the writer cuts everything that is unnecessary and often adds those spontaneous touches we call style. They produce the illusion of easy writing that means easy reading.

7. **Edit** – The writer goes over the piece line by line, often reading aloud, to make sure that each word, each mark of punctuation, each space between words contributes to the effectiveness of the piece of writing. The writer uses the most simple words appropriate to the meaning, writes primarily with verbs and nouns, respects the subject-verb-object sentence, builds paragraphs that carry a full load of meaning to the reader, and continues to use specific, accurate information as the raw material of vigorous, affective writing. The writer avoids any break with the customs of spelling and language that do not clarify meaning.

Student Reflection On Their Writing Processes

Students can report their writing practices and their feelings about themselves as writers through unfinished sentences either in written form or as an interview, such as those presented in **Figure 1.4**. This survey can be completed with all ages of writers. Another approach to understanding students' concepts about writing is given in **Figure 1.5** and used in upper elementary grades twice a year to encourage students to be self-aware and to monitor their growth as writers.

Figure 1.3

The Composing Processes of Unskilled and Skilled Writers

Stage	Unskilled Writers	Skilled Writers
Exploring	Do not consider exploring important or useful	Consider exploring activities useful and helpful
	Spend little time exploring	Spend more time considering and contemplating
Planning	Typically make no plans before they write	Accompany their planning with note-taking, sketching, diagramming
	Prefer not to outline; make outlines after piece is drafted	
	Develop limited plans as they write	
Drafting	Write in a way that imitates speech	Write in a way that is less like speech
	Write without concern for reader	Show more sensitivity to reader
	Are preoccupied with technical matters of spelling and punctuation Do not pause very much Do not rescan or reflect	Spend more time in drafting
		Frequently stop to rescan, reread, reflect
		Respond to all aspects of rhetorical problem – audience, medium, voice, etc.
	Focus on topic alone, not the whole rhetorical problem	
Revising	Either revise very little or only at the surface and word levels	Either revise very little or revise extensively at sentence and paragraph level
	See revision mainly as "error hunting"	Are more concerned with content and reader appeal
	Stop revising when they feel they have not violated any rules	Do not become unduly concerned with matters of form
Revising	Spend so much time and energy on changing spelling and punctuation during drafting stage that they lose sight of larger problems	See revising as recursive and ongoing
	Often see revising as "making a neat copy in ink" copy in ink"	

Figure 1.4

Oral or Written Interview With Open-Ended Sentences

1. When my instructor tells us that we are authors, I....

2. Whenever I'm told that I have a writing assignment to do, I....

3. When famous authors write, they....

4. A person I know personally who writes well is _____.
   What makes this person a good writer is....

5. I do my best writing when....

6. The reason(s) that I've never written much....

7. What scares me about the whole idea of writing....

8. The hardest thing(s) about writing....

9. Writing would be a lot easier if....

10. I'd feel a lot better about writing....

11. If I could ask another writer about learning to write well, I would ask....

12. If I thought that I could write well, I....

Thanks to Jean Anne Clyde, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY.

Figure 1.5

Questions for Student Writers

Student's Name _____ Date _____

1. Do you know how to write? ___ (If answer is Yes, go to 2a)
   (If No, go to 2b)

2a. How did you learn to write? _____

_____

_____

2b. How do people learn to write? _____

_____

_____

3. Why do people write? _____

_____

_____

4. What do you think a good writer needs to do in order to write well?

_____

_____

_____

5. How does a reader decide which pieces of writing or stories are the good ones?

_____

_____

_____

6. In general, how do you feel about what you write? _____

_____

_____

_____

7. Do you like to read? _____

Thanks to Dayne Shealey, Wood Elementary School, West Columbia, SC (adapted from Atwell, 1987).

Publishing Student Writing

A key element – perhaps the key element – in implementing a successful writing program is publishing student writing. Publishing does not always mean printing student writing in a formal book or sending a carefully chosen piece to a national magazine. Perhaps it would be better to think of students' sharing their writing with a variety of real audiences.

Sharing can take place between one student and a peer sitting together in a corner of the room. Sharing can be students' reading their work in a circle of their classmates. The important criteria for classroom publishing – or sharing – are, first, that students receive positive responses and, second, that all students in the class have the opportunity to publish.

Donald Graves (1980) points out the importance of publishing as he answers the question, "Why publish?" His answers, slightly paraphrased and condensed, are as follows:

1. *"Why publish?" is closely connected with "Why write?"* Writing is a public act, meant to be shared with many audiences. If no one cares what the children have to say, if no one reads what they write, why should they try to write effectively? Publishing is perhaps the single most important ingredient of a good writing program. A published work is the hardcover record of past accomplishments that gives children confidence to continue writing.

2. *Publishing contributes strongly to a writer's development.* When children first write, they have no past or future. As they build a series of published works, they have a sense of development, change, and even individual voice (my usual style).

3. *Publishing also contributes to a sense of audience.* A young writer finds, for example, that other children put their names on the checkout card in her book and make comments about the contents.

4. *Publishing helps at home.* The book is tangible evidence that the child is progressing.

5. *When children publish, teachers can work with more of their skills.* Spelling, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting receive high attention when written pieces go to final draft. They receive even greater attention when writing goes to broader audiences through publishing.

Stephen Judy, in the very useful English Teacher's Handbook, lists a number of publishing opportunities within the school for student writers (**Figure 1.6**). Many educational magazines solicit student writing at different grade levels. In **Figure 1.7** is a sample of magazine publishing sources.

Figure 1.6

Audiences for Student Writing

Publications

Mimeograph books for special occasions: Thanksgiving, end-of-the-term, winter, Valentines Day.

Concept books: colors, emotions, seaside animals, simple machines.

Prebound blank books or photo albums: Spend the term filling them with selected writing.

Class magazine or newspaper: Study magazines and newspapers. Decide what section the class would like to include, and assign responsibility for each to small groups. Include art work.

Individual books: Bind the books, and share them at a book fair or place in the library. Students can write prefaces and bibliographic information about the author for each other. Books can be reviewed orally and in the class magazine.

Class books: Bind books created by the class as a whole. Make joke books, riddle books, cookbooks, or reference books.

Class reading assignment: Each student responds to a classmate's paper with a collage, free writing, poem, or drawing.

Bulletin boards: Share first drafts on a classroom bulletin board with the title: "Work in Progress." Share edited final drafts on hallway bulletin boards or in the school office. Make the most of interesting graphics to show off the writing.

Use already existing publications in the school and community.

Create new publications: Develop your own magazines, newspapers, or writing contests, being careful not to single out only a few best writers.

Swap writing between classrooms: Exchange class magazines, stories, and direction – sharing papers (how to tie a shoe or make peanut butter sandwiches) with other classes. Sponsor a "Penny a Poem" fair, and invite other classes to buy poetry. Write stories for younger children.

Write supplementary texts: Provide writers with teachers' objectives and with the purchased texts. Have them write more detailed and more interesting booklets for a particular audience. Use the library and their own experience for background information.

Figure 1.7
Publishing Sources for Student Writing, Grades One-Twelve

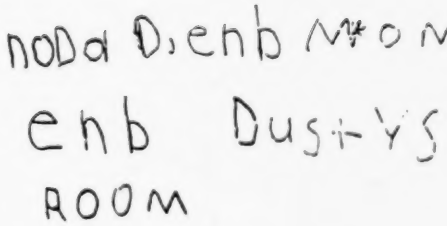
Magazine	Ages	Types of Writing Accepted
American Girl 830 Third Avenue New York, NY 10022	12-14	Short stories, poems, and letters to the editor.
Boy's Life 1325 Walnut Hill Lane Irving, TX 75062	all	Real-life stories.
Children's Digest P.O. Box 567 Indianapolis, IN 46206	8-10	Poetry, short stories, riddles, and jokes.
The Children's Album P.O. Box 262 Manchester, CA 95459	all	Short stories, poems, and nonfiction.
Child Life P.O. Box 567 Indianapolis, IN 46206	7-9	Short stories, poetry, riddles, jokes, and letters to the editor.
Cricket 1058 8th Street LaSalle, IL 61301	6-12	Letters and Cricket League monthly; short story and poetry contests.
Ebony Jr! 820 S. Michigan Ave. Chicago, IL 60605	all	Essays, short stories, poems, jokes, riddles, and cartoons.
Highlights for Children Church Street Honesdale, PA 18431	5-10	Poetry, short stories, jokes, riddles, and letters to the editor.
Jack and Jill P. O. Box 567 Indianapolis, IN 46026	5-10	Short stories, poems, riddles, and letters to the editor.
Kids Magazine P.O. Box 3041 Grand Central Station New York, NY 10017	all	Short stories, reports, poems, cartoons, puzzles, and most other forms of writing.
The McGuffey Writer 400A McGuffey Hall Miami University Oxford, OH 45056	all	Poetry, short stories, essays, and cartoons.
Merlyn's Pen P.O. Box 716 East Greenwich, RI 02818	12-14	Essays, poems, and short stories.
Scholastic Voice 50 West 44th Street New York, NY 10036	13-14	Short stories and poems; also writing contests.
Stone Soup P.O. Box 83 Santa Cruz, CA 95063	all	Poetry, short stories, and book reports (books to Children's Art Foundation be reviewed are provided by the magazine).
Wombat 365 Ashton Drive Athens, GA 30606	all	Short stories, poems, essays, puzzles, cartoons, and book reports.
Young World P.O. Box 567 Indianapolis, IN 46206	10-14	Poetry, short stories, jokes, and letters to the editor.

Special Considerations: Young Elementary Students

We now know that young students can write from the very first day that they enter school. They will use their current level of knowledge about written language – all that they have learned from watching their parents and other more mature writers, all that they have learned from looking at books and being read to, all they have learned from their community and their early school experiences. Their writing will show the surprising extent of their knowledge of the cultural conventions of writing and also their delightful self-created symbols where they do not yet know adult written conventions. Each child's writing will be different, reflecting differing life experiences to date. These differences in demonstrated ability may at first be disconcerting to teachers who are used to attaining rather uniform levels of learning in response to their lessons. Actually, these variations are a natural part of early language development and are valuable as a source of learning for other students. The samples of five-year-old writing in **Figure 1.8** indicate the inventiveness of beginning writers as they communicate their messages.

Figure 1.8

Two Samples of Five-Year-Old Writing



In response to a teacher question, "If you could go anywhere, where would you go?" Robert wrote:

I would go to a wadden. I want to see somebody get Mary D.

(I would go to a wedding. I want to see somebody get married.)

(No Dads and Moms in Dusty's room)

Thanks to teachers Terry Crawford and Martha Wall for sharing these samples of student writing.

Dusty and Robert's teachers observe and value their extensive five-year-old knowledge of written language. There is no need to correct "errors." Just as childish lisps are gradually replaced by mature pronunciation, so will immature writing gradually take on the spelling and structure of mature writing – if students have daily experience sending and receiving written communications.

Figures 1.9, and 1.12 are writing samples of students in successful writing programs in first-and-second grade. Their differences in language skill and purpose for writing enriched the language in-

struction in their classes. They wrote and learned side by side with other students, encouraged to move forward in their learning by teachers who observed their work carefully and taught new skills when they were ready for them, not damaging their development by over-emphasis on errors.

How can administrators assist the development of successful writing programs for young children? First, teachers who have taught writing through artificial sequences of workbook lessons will need to understand the "wholeness" of young children's learning and the power of real communication activities as a medium for language growth. They will need to see for themselves convincing demonstrations of the effectiveness of a whole-language approach and be willing to consider the possibility of putting away their workbooks and filling the day with real communication activities. Once they are interested in new approaches, teachers will need assistance in acquiring new teaching strategies and continuing support as they solve problems of scheduling, organization, materials, and evaluation.

A "whole-language" approach involves young students in using language functionally and purposefully to meet their own needs. Although at first it may seem to teachers that a clearly planned lesson that focuses on one small skill is more effective, observation of young children in classrooms shows just the very opposite. When primary-grade students are encouraged to talk about things they want to know and write about what is happening to them, they will rapidly acquire the skills of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence structure. Teachers also surround the students with written language of all kinds – students' writing ready to be read by others, storybooks, informational books, poetry, newspapers, children's magazines, teachers' memos and notes, posters, and signs. Just as in classrooms at all grade levels, young students need to write frequently in school, write for real purposes/audiences, receive feedback, and discuss how other writers use words effectively. Whole language classrooms have mailboxes, writing centers complete with a wide range of paper and implements, library corners, newsstands, "office" role-playing centers, and appropriate labels for everything.

The changes in the role of the teacher are refreshing for teachers, once they are comfortable with them. Gone are the long tedious hours of correcting stacks of dittos, the making of dittos to reteach difficult isolated skills, the correcting of errors in tedious "child writing" created "for the teacher." Gone is the strain of keeping a restless group of young students focused on a task that is boring for some and incomprehensible to others.

Instead, teachers choose library books, create inviting centers, respond as a real audience to many varied communications from students, and write personal notes in journals. Record keeping is still important but emphasizes descriptive entries in a log. "Jason learned about quotation marks from Lindsay but is still confused about the comma placement."

Figure 1.9
Samples Of First-Grade Writing In September and October

In September, Joseph's writing was brief, with close attention to correct spelling and careful handwriting as, in this sample:

I went to the gamepark.

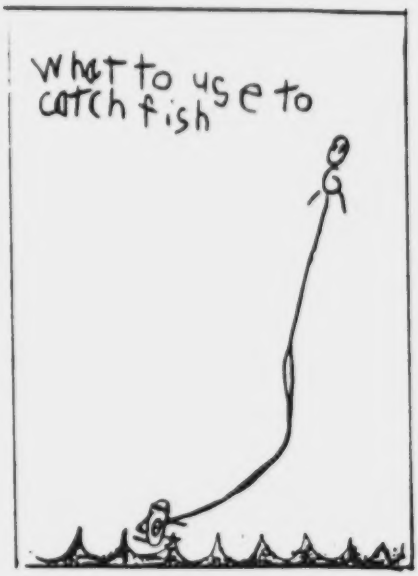
Joseph's teacher asked questions such as "What did you see there?" to help him understand how to expand his messages. Below is a sample that was characteristic of his more imaginative writing one month later, revised by Joseph to add a few missing words. Note his growing knowledge of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation:

Once upon a time there was a Brontousaurus and a Stegosaurus
The Brontousaurus said let's buy a very big tree. But I cant
reach it, said the Stagosaurus. But I could cook it said the
Brontousaurus Okay, said the Stegousaurus Yes we will have a plant
eater's party said the Brontosaurus So, they had one the next
day.

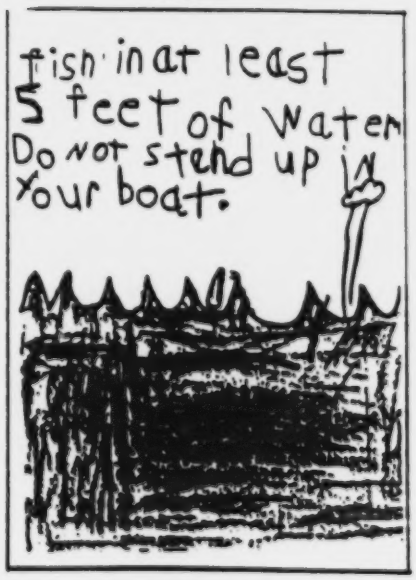
Figure 1.10

First-Grade Informational Writing in Book Format

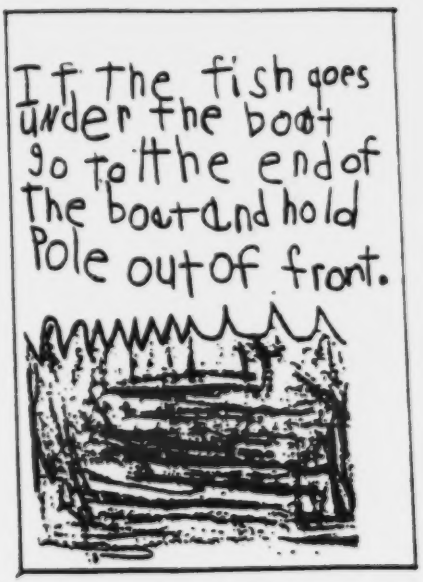
a. Prewriting: Plans for future books



b. Title Page



c. Page one



d. Page two

Figure 1.11

First-Grade Personal Narrative Writing in Book Format Typed by Child on Computer

(Title) THINGS OBOUT MY NABERS

(p.1) HELLO MY NAM IS TOM KLEIN

(p.2) IT IS VEREE FUN AT MY HOUSE

(p.3) MY NABERSE ARE FUN TO PLAE WITH WIN WEE PLAE SOCER IT IS VAEREE FUN TO PLAE SOCER WE OLWASE PLAE SOCER

(p.4) THIS WEEK MY DAD WINT FISHING WITH MY GRAND DAD THAE COT SIX FISH MY DAD TUCK THIM HOME WEE ATE THE FISH

(p.5) THERE ARE MOR FISH THEN WEE THOT THAER WUD BEE

Thanks to teachers Mary McIlwain, Mark Chevalier, Renee Falconer, and Cathy Biget.

Figure 1.12

Second-Grade Personal Narrative Writing With Revisions After Conference About the Content

27 Sep. 1984 Mr. Biget is Swinging Me!

Between the tents and fire Mr. Biget is holding my foot and my hand. He is swinging me round and round. Both of us are getting dizzy. It is like I am flying. It goes so fast it was hard to see. I had a feeling that I never felt before. *I am going higher and higher.* It is very fun. Faster and higher until he stops. – Tallat Treto, ESL Student

(Italicized sentences were added later after students had asked the author questions in a conference.)

Special Considerations: Minority Dialect Speakers

Throughout our history, new citizens have come to the United States from countries all around the world. We are proud of their contributions as individuals and as bearers of diverse cultural heritage to our country's development. But teaching English to the children of a diverse population is sometimes difficult, especially when many citizens – newcomers and old residents – are poor and are not strong readers and writers. Isolation from the mainstream – whether it be in the southern rural countryside, the western city ghetto, or the pockets of minority poverty scattered everywhere across the country – creates differences in pronunciation, syntax, and word usage that we call nonstandard dialect. Students with a few dialect features here and there pose no special classroom problems, but students who come to school speaking very strong nonstandard dialects with many divergent features raise troublesome questions about English/language arts instruction.

When students write, many of the nonstandard language elements learned in local oral communication show up in their writing. These nonstandard elements are often distressing to teachers who speak and write standard English, and teachers may, as a result, discourage students from writing, unwittingly isolating these students from the very language practice they need because of an assumption that the students are not capable or "ready." Teachers need to understand the nature of dialect variation and its relationship to learning standard written English in order to give students encouragement and writing instruction appropriate to their needs.

Students with diverse language backgrounds, like all students, are more likely to learn to write well if they are familiar with, and engage in, the writing processes described in Chapter 1. They may, however, need additional help with unfamiliar vocabulary, certain sentence structures and word usages, and certain forms and styles of writing. Especially as students move beyond basic writing into writing assignments that are more academically demanding, additional time may be needed for them to become familiar with the characteristics of these forms of writing. Extended time at the prewriting stage is particularly important (California State Department of Education, 1983). Students should be given opportunities to try out orally both the form and content of what they wish to say, to ask questions, to examine examples of others' writing, and to discuss freely alternatives for their compositions.

Some generalizations about the relationship of nonstandard speech to writing instruction derived from research are:

1. Speakers of nonstandard dialects do usually understand standard English. Through their communication with standard English speakers and through watching TV, most students have attained a standard "receptive" language ability, even though they retain the habit of speaking the community dialect that seems most comfortable for them.

2. Learning different varieties of English is a natural language function, accomplished even by preschool-age children as they "learn" appropriate talk for babies, friends, parents, and community adults. Most minority dialect speakers naturally vary their use of dialect according to its appropriateness in various situations. Students can learn standard English as a second dialect without having to eliminate their original dialect, which is useful in community situations.

3. Students do not need to – and should not – wait until they can speak standard English to begin to read. To delay needed reading instruction because of nonstandard speech is to deny a student access to appropriate instruction, and, especially if a capable minority child is thus negatively labeled, the delay can unnecessarily initiate a long downward spiral of school failure. Dialect-related miscues in the early grades such as, "They went home to they house," do not interfere with comprehension. Nor does difficulty with selected phonic relationships associated with oral dialect indicate generalized reading weakness. Students who are not exposed to varied reading

material in their homes are especially in need of school exposure to interesting, high-quality reading material.

4. Learning to write standard English is even easier than learning to speak it – if the student is exposed on a daily basis to books, newspapers, letters, posters, and other appropriate writing. To learn to speak standard English, the student must break long-standing habits that have been reinforced in many social interactions. But writing is more or less a "clean slate," without many previous habits to unlearn. After all, we all speak differently than we write, don't we?

5. Most students who speak nonstandard English are from family situations characterized by economic hardship, and many are further isolated from the mainstream by minority status or a rural location. This isolation creates a problem that is even more troublesome than speech characteristics; it creates habitual styles of interaction that are very different from those usually found in middle-class schools. Classrooms that provide real communication activities, periods of independent work, and leeway for divergent work styles can create conditions for success for these "at risk" youngsters while they learn to adjust to the expectations of the mainstream culture.

Schools with minority, rural, and low-economic populations will need to provide teachers with appropriate background understanding of the diverse linguistic and interactive styles they encounter in the classroom. Ways to make connections with local community leaders may be needed. Appreciation for the strengths and talents of low-achieving students should be fostered. New programs for "at risk" students have achieved some successes; putting teachers and administrators in touch with a network of other professionals with similar concerns will provide a basis for solving classroom problems not addressed in published literature.

2: Development of Writing Programs

Writing surprises me,
sometimes disappoints me – but often clarifies what I'm thinking and it's as if I'm tracing over my thoughts that are already laid out ahead of my pen, like spreading a secret solution on invisible ink – this message appears – that "aha" moment....
Writing is so powerful – that once you know what it does for you – you will not let go.
– Audre Allison, high school teacher

At lunch she showed us videotapes of kids writing. I remember munching on an apple, and my words were – "Just amazing!" Her kids looked like my kids – Yet they could write – I could hardly believe it – what she and Sondra had been saying did make sense, did apply to my kids – "By golly, I've got to give my kids this chance."
– Reba Pekala, First Grade Teacher

All over the country, teachers are sharing stories of how they made far-reaching changes in their instruction. These changes generally occur over a period of years and through fits and starts, rather than according to a rationally planned schedule. Nancie Atwell (1987) reports her discomfort as she listened to teachers at conferences reporting successes with student writers that she had not been able to accomplish. She listened and thought, but she made no changes in her classroom at that time.

Then Nancie went to the Bread Loaf School of English Program in Writing. There, Dixie Goswami encouraged her to reflect on her own writing as a source of answers for her classroom. "All that summer I wrote, looked at how I wrote, and thought about what my discoveries meant for my kids as writers. It was a summer of contradictions," she remembers (p. 9). When school started up again, Nancie made some minor changes in her program, giving kids more options but retaining the same assignments that she had worked out so carefully in the previous years.

"I rationalized hard that winter," Nancie remembers. "I thought that what I needed were even more creative, more open topics. I needed thrilling prewriting activities. I needed better students...who came to me better prepared. I needed better colleagues" (p.11). Like many teachers who take an instructional course and then return alone to the classroom, she sensed a vision of something better but was still unable to effect significant changes in her teaching of writing.

At this point, the teachers in her school decided to join together in collaborative inquiry about their teaching – to raise questions about their instruction and together seek answers to these questions. No outside person told them the questions they should ask or pressured them to accept an uncomfortable schedule, format, or writing curriculum. Perhaps the support of this collegial interaction and the continued stimulation from invited consultants finally unlocked Nancie's defenses against change. Suddenly, one day she was ready to start.

Together Nancie and her students created a "reading-and-writing- workshop" approach. They found out many things – mainly that all of these students (not just the six "excellent" students) could grow into competent writers when the students were given shared responsibility for their learning. Nancie and the other teachers at Boothbay continued to research their developing classrooms, discovering many common elements across all of their individual programs, which they now share with other teachers (summarized in **Figure 1.1**, Chapter 1).

What can we learn from the experience of the teachers at Boothbay? Certainly, it reminds us that change is hard, and teachers need support and leeway for moving ahead at their own pace. Another

lesson is the centrality of teachers in leading change. As visiting consultants, teachers from other schools had the stamp of authenticity in their advice. As a collaborative group of peers, the teachers at Boothbay were in charge of their own learning, creating an energy for change that went far beyond what could have been asked of them.

Educational change is difficult to accomplish, as anyone who has been involved in major school change efforts can attest. To those of us who were caught up in the heady days of innovation in the '70s, it was a sobering experience to watch those innovations melt away in the '80s. Today's planners can take advantage of what has been learned from several decades of research on educational change. Two key elements stand out: a planned, comprehensive approach to school improvement that extends over time and the centrality of teachers as both planners and executors of change.

Although common elements of successful writing improvement projects can be identified, it is also true that projects differ widely according to differences in local context. Goals, priorities, duration, and content of projects differ from district to district. The impetus for change may arise from faculty concerns or from external pressures, such as state evaluation systems and directives. In some cases, both curriculum and instructional development are envisioned, while in other cases only adjustments in curriculum are needed to keep up with instructional development that has already taken place. Far-reaching changes may be contemplated, such as those experienced by Nancie Atwell and her colleagues described at the beginning of this chapter, or only the refinement of an already established program.

The following section describes steps in creating a collaborative approach to program development. Program planners can use documents and procedures that have been useful in other settings, such as those provided in this and the following chapters, but they must develop mechanisms for the creation of a program tailored to local circumstances in order to meet the needs of their particular schools.

Elements Of Writing Program Development

The model of development presented here involves a carefully planned series of experiences that extends over time, perhaps two years or more. As envisioned, both administrators and teachers will work together, with teacher concerns and practices at the center of the change process. Clarification of the various roles of district and school personnel is important to the successful functioning of the program.

In-service activities provide for the necessary theoretical base and the acquisition of needed instructional skills to implement change. Flexibility is built into the process for teachers – who differ widely in their concerns and levels of expertise – to partake in the program at a pace and in roles that are comfortable for them. It is assumed that program development will eventually be school-wide, but it is possible for initial steps to be made by the teachers who are most open to change.

The elements described here are not intended as separate activities. Nor is there a necessary order, although building commitment and voluntary experimentation of new instructional strategies provide a foundation for more systematic, school-wide development. Like writing itself, the elements are recursive and overlapping, taking place concurrently and cycling back on each other as another layer of change takes place.

Successful instructional development will include teachers as fully-functioning partners in change from the very beginning stages, involving them in defining the problems to be solved, as well as in the selection of potential curricula and instructional programs. Time is needed for extended processes of reflection, analysis, and synthesis of formal and practical knowledge to convert general understandings into new schedules, instructional strategies, and organizational patterns in an actual functioning school.

Implementing a successful writing program is a process, not an event (Capper and Bagenstos, 1987), leading to the type of program described in Figure 2.1.

Haugen, Kean, and Mohan (1981) suggest that a comparison of two opposing approaches to teaching writing such as that shown in Figure 2.2 can serve as a useful guide for self-observation and discussion as teachers articulate changes in their current program. It may also provide a basis for assessing "where we are now" during long-term change projects. These and other teacher- response forms can be used at a faculty meeting, with all teachers filling them out and discussing their responses, or individually, by all teachers or by English teachers only.

Figure 2.1
Summary of the Elements of Writing Program Development

An excellent school writing program should include:

- Teachers who write themselves and who have investigated how to teach writing.
- Writing of whole pieces of discourse, rather than exercises in grammar books.
- Much writing in all subject areas.
- Emphasis on successive drafts of writing, with evaluation delayed until the final draft.
- Teaching (not just requiring) the revision small-group process.
- Allowing students to write for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Keeping individual student writing folders in the classroom so that students and teachers can measure progress over time and learn from previous papers.
- Teaching mechanical and grammatical skills using the students' own writing.
- Much reading and discussing of a wide variety of literature in all genres and subjects.
- Publishing and/or displaying student-written work in the school.
- Allowing students many opportunities to find/choose their own topics for writing.
- Fitting the school/district method of evaluating writing growth to the method of teaching writing (using holistic scoring for a writing-based program, etc.).
- Emphasizing content skills (logic, coherence, specificity, organization) before mechanical surface-level skills (punctuation and spelling).
- Instilling in all students a belief that they can write and have something to write about.
- Supporting teachers' attendance at in-service workshops and conferences that focus on improving the teaching of writing.

From Robert N. Fortenberry and Sandra Price Burkett, "The Administrator's Role in a Writing/Thinking Program," in A Practitioner's Conference on Writing Thinking in the Curriculum, Resource materials used at Concurrent Sessions of meeting of the Mississippi Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, May 1987, Jackson, MS.

Figure 2.2

A Comparison of Teacher and Student Behaviors When Writing Is Assigned and When Writing Is Taught

When Writing is Assigned	When Writing is Taught
1. The teacher asks the student to write on one topic from a list.	1. The teacher encourages the student to write precisely and effectively.
2. The topic is general and unstructured.	2. The topic is specific and structured.
3. There is no specific audience.	3. There is a clear audience.
4. The topic allows for general thinking.	4. The topic forces precise thought and supporting details.
5. The purpose is vague.	5. The purpose is specific.
6. The student writes for a grade.	6. The student writes to improve ability to express precisely.
7. The student is asked to write spontaneously.	7. The student is encouraged to think about the topic.
8. Time and/or work limit is imposed.	8. The student evaluates purpose, then perceives the amount of work needed to fulfill it.
9. A first draft is required for a grade.	9. Student encouraged to review and rewrite the first draft.
10. There are negative comments.	10. Comments are positive and constructive.
11. Corrections are usually for mechanical errors.	11. Recommendations include suggestions for improvement in style, format, and organization of thoughts.
12. All errors are corrected by the teacher.	12. Only specific errors are corrected by the teacher.
13. Teacher's time is spent correcting papers.	13. Teacher's time is spent in class, teaching.
14. Student is unsure of how grade evolved.	14. Student earns and understands the grade.
15. Student is unaware of significant changes.	15. Student sees changes.
16. Student and teacher are bored by the student's writing.	16. Student and teacher are excited by student's writing.

Cecelia Kingston. Competency Testing and Beyond. (Conference presentation, May 1979). From A Guide to the Teacher's Role in the Writing Program: Report No. CS 207 199 (p. 17) by Nancy S. Haugen, John M. Kean, and Maribeth Mohan, eds., Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1981 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 220 865).

SETTING GOALS AND CLARIFYING PARAMETERS OF CHANGE

Before beginning a writing development program, the local context for change should be assessed. Participants should understand how their own priorities and roles fit into the total context for change. Questions such as these can be considered:

- How does the proposed program development fit into district and school priorities? Are there other commitments, to physical plant or to other curriculum areas, that will limit resources for this program?
- How do the beliefs of the school board and central administration relate to the underlying beliefs of the proposed program?
- Are there preset time limitations on the improvement project?
- Will schedules, teacher assignments, and allocation of resources have to be changed to accomplish the proposed improvements? If so, what points of resistance will have to be overcome?
- How do texts and evaluation instruments currently in use relate to the proposed programs?
- What district and school funds are available to support the staff development program?
- What district personnel could be used as instructional resources?
- What scheduled in-service days are available? Will a summer planning group be supported by the district?
- What support can be gathered among parents and other members of the community?
- Are there professional meetings that teachers and administrators can attend to gain expertise and conviction for the project?
- Is there a supportive network of teachers nearby who are already making changes similar to the ones proposed?
- What outside consultants are available to assist the project? Do they have expertise in the process of change? In content information?

When a teacher committee provides the leadership for change, members may need to work with the administration to understand building and district variables that may impact on the project. Overly positive or negative attitudes toward institutional variables can be addressed, and a positive climate for productive work created. A survey instrument, such as the one shown in Figure 2.3, can be useful for assessing teacher knowledge/attitudes toward support for writing programs. Capper and Bagenstos (1987) suggest that such an assessment instrument can be used in several ways:

- For an administrators' own objective use.
- With a task force for assessing program support.
- At a faculty meeting, with all teachers filling it out.
- To be filled out by English teachers.

Figure 2.3
Assessing District- and School-Wide Support for Writing

Criteria	Response		
	Yes	?	No
1. Does the district provide sufficient time and money for in-service programs related to the teaching of writing?	___	___	___
2. Does the district provide sufficient funds for the purchase of instructional materials that teachers need to improve student writing?	___	___	___
3. Does the district provide sufficient funds to support student newspapers and student magazines?	___	___	___
4. Does the district have a written statement of policy governing the content and dissemination of both school-wide and classroom publications?	___	___	___
5. Does the school make systematic efforts to inform parents about its writing program and to solicit parent involvement in the improvement of that program?	___	___	___
6. Do school administrators write frequently and share their writing with members of the staff?	___	___	___
7. Do school administrators support the requests of teachers to attend conferences and professional meetings concerned with the teaching of writing?	___	___	___
8. Do school administrators encourage teachers to arrange programs in which professional writers and others who use writing in their careers speak to students about writing? And do administrators provide time and funds for such programs?	___	___	___
9. Does the school help teachers, students, and parents value the importance of writing by displaying student writing and providing suitable recognition for excellent student writers?	___	___	___
10. Do school administrators encourage teachers to publish classroom newspapers and magazines and to make other suitable arrangements for the informal dissemination of student writing?	___	___	___
11. Do school administrators encourage all teachers (not just English teachers) to be responsible for developing student writing abilities and to cooperate in establishing school-wide programs for improving student writing?	___	___	___
12. Do teachers in all the academic disciplines require students to write, both as a way of learning and as a way of assessing learning?	___	___	___

What aspects of the district- or school-wide support for the teaching of writing deserve special commendation?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What aspects of the district- or school-wide support for the teaching of writing require greatest improvement?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

From Allan A. Glatthorn. Writing in the Schools: Improvement Though Effective Leadership (pp. 12-13), Reston, VA.: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1981.

Build Initial Interest and Commitment Among the Faculty

In this phase of the improvement project, the suggestions of Hord and her associates at what they call "Stage 0" of school change, the stage of developing awareness, can be helpful:

Stage 0 – Awareness Concerns

a. If possible, involve teachers in discussions and decisions about the innovation and its implementation.

b. Share enough information to arouse interest, but not so much that it overwhelms.

c. Acknowledge that a lack of awareness is expected and reasonable, and that no questions about the innovation are foolish.

d. Encourage unaware persons to talk with colleagues who know about the innovation.

e. Take steps to minimize gossip and inaccurate sharing of information about the innovation.

A short workshop series of two or three presentations by teachers who have experience with writing instruction can demonstrate to faculty the possibilities of program development. Such workshops should involve teachers both in new concepts about writing and in the practical skills that will be needed. Selection of workshop topics should be based on expressed teacher concerns so that they will know that they will receive assistance in solving the problems they identify in the writing program.

A questionnaire to assess faculty preferences for in-service topics such as the one in **Figure 2.4** gives teachers the opportunity to report their own instructional needs as a basis for these initial workshops. Such an approach serves to ensure teachers' sense of ownership of the ultimate plan and demonstrates the administration's willingness to include teachers, not just as knowledgeable participants in improvement programs, but as decision-making professionals who expect reasonable autonomy in responding to needs of pupils.

Support for individual in-service experiences, such as conferences, graduate level courses, and visits to other schools, is desirable to stimulate teacher interest in development. Opportunities for teachers to meet together to share reactions and concerns, within the school faculty and among faculties in other similar schools in the district, also meet teacher needs to express anxieties, clarify misconceptions, and communicate enthusiasm and expertise. One district has had success with "professional sharing" at district in-service meetings, without external speakers or a set program – just teachers sharing with each other.

Figure 2.4

Survey of Preferences for Program Content

Directions: Listed below are the topics and activities that are often included in the in-service programs related to the teaching of writing. Indicate your preferences for each kind of content and activity by circling one of these symbols:

SA – I strongly agree that this content or activity should be included.

A – **I agree** that this content or activity should be included.

? – **I am uncertain** as to whether or not this content or activity should be included.

D – **I disagree** that this content or activity should be included.

SD – **I strongly disagree** that this content or activity should be included.

1. Understanding the composing process and its implications for teaching.	SA A ? D SD
2. Developing a composition curriculum for our school.	SA A ? D SD
3. Knowing and applying research in the teaching of writing.	SA A ? D SD
4. Developing composition assignments.	SA A ? D SD
5. Motivating students to write.	SA A ? D SD
6. Using prewriting activities to improve student writing.	SA A ? D SD
7. Helping students learn to revise.	SA A ? D SD
8. Developing sentence-combining materials.	SA A ? D SD
9. Using holistic assessment to make school-wide evaluations of student writing.	SA A ? D SD
10. Grading and responding to student writing.	SA A ? D SD
11. Using peer conferences to improve writing.	SA A ? D SD
12. Implementing a naturalistic or "writer's workshop" approach to student writing.	SA A ? D SD
13. Publishing and sharing student writing.	SA A ? D SD
14. Doing our own writing and sharing our writing with each other.	SA A ? D SD
15. Teaching specific writing skills.	SA A ? D SD
16. Facilitating creative writing.	SA A ? D SD
17. Relating the study of grammar to the development of writing skills.	SA A ? D SD

18. Helping less able students improve their writing. SA A ? D SD

19. Improving writing in other school subjects. SA A ? D SD

20. Working with parents to improve student writing. SA A ? D SD

Other: (Please list any other content you believe should be included.)

From Allan A. Glatthorn. Writing in the Schools: Improvement Through Effective Leadership (p. 25), Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1981.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Successful staff development programs conducted by the National Writing Project, the Bread Loaf School of Writing, and other centers of writing instruction involve teachers and administrators in their own writing and unite theory and practice in a way that supports teachers as intelligent professionals in program development.

Writing becomes valued in schools when all school staff experience the meaning that purposeful writing can have in their own lives. They begin to understand the problems of student writers more realistically when they reflect on the processes that work for them as writers. Teaching writing as a problem-solving activity requires instructional flexibility on the part of teachers, and they need time to understand how they can put it into practice in their individual context.

Spanjer and Boiarsky (1981) describe a ten-step staff development program for writing instruction based on the experiences of teachers in similar programs. The assumptions underlying this approach emphasize the centrality of teachers as experts and the importance of engaging all teachers in the school in activities that will assist their understanding of writing processes.

The interesting approach to consultant presentations, called the "DO-LOOK-LEARN" method, is especially appropriate when teachers are learning new writing instruction strategies that involve complex teacher-student interactions based on unfamiliar beliefs about how students learn. The DO-LOOK-LEARN method provides both for acquisition of practical teaching strategies and for reflection on the belief structure that supports these strategies.

The staff development program is based on the following assumptions:

1. Faculties are aware of their own teaching needs. They are capable of developing their own staff development programs for acquiring knowledge and skills to meet those needs without the help of outside specialists.

2. The best teacher of teachers is another teacher who has had success in a similar situation. The practices of these successful teachers can be effectively demonstrated to others.

3. Teaching writing is the responsibility of teachers of all subjects, not just those of language arts. Writing should be integrated with all subject areas.

4. Processes of prewriting, drafting, and revising are the basics that must be mastered. To understand fully the processes of writing and to lead students effectively through these processes, teachers themselves must write.

The ten steps of the staff development program are:

1. Enlist the support of the school principal.

2. Inform all faculty members of the school's interest in an effective writing program.

3. Through a faculty meeting, determine/solicit teachers to participate and/or present a program to develop their skills in writing instruction.

4. Compile a bibliography on writing with the help of the librarian/media specialist to be used by program participants. (An annotated bibliography, Writing Teachers' Resources for Professional Literacy, is available from the Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory.)

5. Identify successful teaching methods by soliciting at least one idea from each participant in the form of a short written description.

6. Sequence these ideas according to the place they fit using the following headings: the writing process, prewriting, drafting, revising, teaching the mechanics, small-group work, the teacher's role, writing in the content areas, and sequencing writing. Note that if one of the headings does not have any teacher ideas under it, then it may be necessary to have a guest presenter share ideas.

7. Schedule dates for the year for each presentation based on the headings listed above.

8. Make a copy of the presentation schedule for all faculty members, even those who have indicated that they would rather not present an idea or participate.

9. Each presentation is made using the DO-LOOK-LEARN method. DO is the first stage, in which, as the writing idea is presented, the participants play the role of the student and must DO what is being taught. LOOK is the second stage, in which the participants LOOK at research gathered about the effectiveness of this method. The participants must compare what they have just done with the assumptions made in the research presented to them. LEARN is the third stage – using the ideas they have seen presented in a lesson plan that is appropriate for their own classes.

10. Conduct workshops according to the schedule using the DO-LOOK-LEARN presentation for the first 90 minutes and (except for the first workshop) using the last 30 minutes to share the experiences of each participant when incorporating the previous workshops idea in their own classroom.

Brief survey forms, such as the ones provided in **Figures 2.5** and **2.6,** can be used along with face-to-face solicitation of suggestions to gather teachers' opinions at important stages of the staff development program.

Figure 2.5

Survey of Preferences for Program Design and Structure

Directions: Listed below are features that might characterize our in-service program. Indicate your preferences for each feature by circling one of these symbols:

SA--**I strongly agree** that this feature should characterize our in-service program.

A--**I agree** that this feature should characterize our in-service program.

?--**I am uncertain** about this feature.

D--**I disagree** that this feature should characterize our in-service program.

SD--**I strongly disagree** that this feature should characterize our in-service program.

1. The in-service program follows a regular schedule with a well-organized agenda for each meeting.	SA A ? D SD
2. The program emphasizes learning practical skills that teachers use in their teaching.	SA A ? D SD
3. The program uses consultants from the outside who are considered experts in the field.	SA A ? D SD
4. The program gives appropriate attention to theory and research.	SA A ? D SD
5. The program enables participants to develop and exchange classroom materials.	SA A ? D SD
6. The program makes use of lectures followed by discussions and questions.	SA A ? D SD
7. The program gives participants a chance to discuss controversial issues in the teaching of writing.	SA A ? D SD
8. The program gives participants an option about what they learn and how they learn it.	SA A ? D SD
9. The program emphasizes "hands-on" activities.	SA A ? D SD

10. The program uses local teachers as the instructors, and teachers have much chance to learn from each other. SA A ? D SD

11. The program provides participants with an opportunity to see new skills demonstrated and practice those skills themselves. SA A ? D SD

12. The program provides opportunities for observing other classes and schools. SA A ? D SD

13. The program provides opportunities for participants to try out new skills in their classrooms and get feedback about their use of those skills. SA A ? D SD

From Allan A. Glatthorn. Writing in the Schools: Improvement Through Effective Leadership (p.23), Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1981.

Figure 2.6

Staff Development Assessment Survey

Directions: Below are several statements about our composition staff development program. Indicate to what extent you agree with each statement by circling one of these symbols:

SA – strongly agree

A – agree

? – uncertain

D – disagree

SD – strongly disagree

1. The staff development program helped me improve my own writing.	SA A ? D SD
2. As a result of the staff development program, I feel more confident in my ability to teach writing.	SA A ? D SD
3. I believe my students are writing better because I participated in the staff development program.	SA A ? D SD
4. The staff development program helped me become a more effective teacher of writing.	SA A ? D SD
5. The staff development program helped me become better informed about current theory and research about the teaching of writing.	SA A ? D SD
6. The staff development program gave me some good ideas for improving our composition curriculum.	SA A ? D SD
7. The staff development program enabled me to work effectively with my colleagues on problems we share.	SA A ? D SD

From Allan A. Glatthorn. Writing in the Schools: Improvement Through Effective Leadership (p.26). Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1981.

District Level

Central office administrator leadership, including commitment to the project and understanding of its goals and direction, is fundamental to the success of of any change in the program. Fullan (1982) states that the role of district administrators is to:

...lead the development and execution of a plan which explicitly addresses and takes into account all the causes of change at the district, school, and classroom levels (p.159).

He also suggests guidelines for the district administrator in the implementation of writing programs:

The administrator must lead a process that...

- Tests out the need for and priority of the writing program.
- Determines the potential appropriateness of the writing program for addressing the need.
- Clarifies, supports, and insists on the role of principals and other administrators as central to the writing program.
- Ensures that direct implementation support is provided in the form of available quality materials, in-service training, one-to-one technical help, and opportunities for peer interaction.
- Allows for certain redefinition and adaptation of the innovation.
- Communicates with and maintains the support of parents and the school board.
- Sets up an information-gathering system to monitor implementation problems.
- Has a realistic time perspective (p.166).

Building Level

Building-level administrators play a central role in change efforts, whether the impetus for change originates at the building or the district level. They are responsible for initiating and maintaining instructional development programs. Building-level administrators:

- Become knowledgeable about the theoretical and practical bases for the project.
- Communicate with and secure commitment from district-level administrators to the goals and activities of the project.
- Coordinate delivery of district resources such as materials, in-service time, and technical assistance.
- Communicate with and maintain the support of parents, the business community, local civic organizations, and cultural and governmental agencies.
- Create teacher leadership structures within the school and work with these groups as needed.
- Maintain awareness of the progress of the project and teacher attitudes during change.
- Create within the faculty a commitment to the project, including incentives.

- Assist in eliminating conflicting demands on teacher time and other barriers to implementation.
- Promote continuing professional interaction among the staff.
- Review administrative structures, schedules, use of space, and allocation of resources in relation to the proposed instructional changes.

Policy Statements and Program Guidelines

Clearly written district and school policy guidelines are important to give direction to program development. When teachers can participate in the formulation of these guidelines, their commitment to them is likely to be greater. These guidelines should be brief and not too detailed but should embody a definite philosophy of how studentslearn language.

The Department of Education in Nova Scotia (1986) states guidelines for elementary language arts programs (including writing instruction) in two ways, first as a statement of philosophy and then, following, as a set of objectives. The objectives do not provide a description of the content of the language arts program; instead they provide a description of the general approach to instruction.

Language Arts in Nova Scotia

One of the major aims of the schools of Nova Scotia is to produce graduates who are confident, thinking, literate individuals. It is our aim to help students develop language fluency not only in the school setting, but in their lives in the wider world.

This guide describes a holistic understanding of language learning, an understanding that is based on a recognition that language development and learning in general are inextricably linked. Language plays an integral part in children's interaction and discovery of their world. When learners are engaged in a topic that interests them, thinking, learning, and communicating occur in a natural, integrated way, and language becomes refined over time through use, not through studying discrete parts. In brief, learning language and using language to learn are inseparable.

It is the aim of the language arts program at all levels to develop the four aspects of language (speaking, listening, writing, and reading) so children may learn to communicate effectively with both peers and adults.

Effective communication is the key to human understanding in all areas, and, therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship between language arts and other components of the curriculum. Learning in these areas is dependent upon effective communication, while at the same time learning to communicate is facilitated when the students are dealing with interesting topics and information from other areas of the curriculum. Always, the focus is on meaning.

Aim

The aim of the language arts program is to help children become effective users of language for communication, learning, and enjoyment.

Objectives

The objectives of the language arts program are:

1. To ensure that communication of meaning remains central to all language arts activities.

2. To provide an environment in which learners can come to value literacy.

3. To provide an environment in which learners feel free to take risks as they use language to attempt to make sense of the world.

4. To ensure that use of language for a variety of real purposes has a central place in the language arts program.

5. To provide opportunities for students to use language skills and knowledge for learning about topics which are useful or interesting to them.

6. To develop students' abilities to select and use the appropriate language conventions for particular situations.

7. To encourage students to review and reflect upon how they use language.

A different approach was taken in the Ferguson-Florissant School District, Ferguson, MI., in writing guidelines for a writing handbook for elementary teachers (1982). Their very brief guidelines are:

- Demonstrate a personal value for writing.
- Utilize a four-stage writing process.
- Produce worthy products.
- Evaluate the writing of self and others using a suitable set of criteria.

General goals or policies may be transformed into program objectives that are useful to guide program evaluation and classroom planning. Too long a list of objectives impedes the planning of meaningful writing experiences. Statements that are too general give insufficient guidance. Usually the objectives will relate to three different aspects of teaching writing:

- Forms and purposes for writing (narration, business letter).
- Writing processes (rehearsing, editing).
- Criteria of writing effectiveness (topic focus, word usage).

Direction for grade-level planning is provided by the guidelines developed in Lenox, MA, provided in **Figure 2.7**. This statement emphasizes objectives in the area of writing processes for each grade level, as processes to be introduced and processes to be developed.

Figure 2.7

Lenox, MA, Public Schools
Writing Program Guidelines, Grades One-Six

Writing Skills	Grades 1-2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Brainstorming	Intro.* -->		Devel.** -->		
Write from personal experience	Intro. (orally/written)	Devel. -->	-->	-->	
Focus on a subject (discovering selecting)		Intro.	Devel. -->	-->	
Narrow the topic			Intro. -->	-->	
Encourage use of the active voice	Intro. (orally written)	-->	Devel. -->	-->	
Show don't tell (use specifics)		Intro.	Devel. -->	-->	
Sharpen the lead			Intro. -->	Devel. -->	
Prune out irrelevant details		Intro.	Devel. -->	-->	
Supply additional details if necessary		Intro.	Devel.		
Polish word-by-word			Intro.	Devel. -->	
Improve the organization	simple sentences		expanded sentences	varied sentence structure	establish mood
Discover the best form of expression			Intro.	Devel. -->	
Editing (spelling/usage/ mechanics)	Intro.	Devel. -->	-->	-->	

* Introduction
** Development

A list of more specific objectives was used to provide guidance in developing a special program for basic writers at the secondary level by the Mississippi Writing Thinking Institute. These objectives, presented in Figure 2.8, embody all aspects of writing: forms and purposes, writing processes, and writing effectiveness.

Figure 2.8

Writing Skills Taught in the Summer Youth Remediation Program
Mississippi Writing/Thinking Consortium

	Music	Work	Getting Along	Leisure Activities	Nature & Wilderness
FL-1 Arranges sentences into a logically organized paragraph.	1,3,4,5,6,7,8	2,5,6,7,8,9,10, *11 *12	1,2,5,7,8,9,11, *2,13,14,16-19	1,2,5,7,8,11,12, *3,14,16-19	2,3,4,6,7,8,9,10, *11 *12,*13,14,15
FL-2 Identify the correct spelling of selected frequently used words.	2,4,7,9	4,10,15,16,17	9,11,14,16,17 *8,19	9,11,13	13,14,15
FL-3 Conjugate forms.	9	6,9,14	*2	*8	4,8,12
FL-4 Construct a coherent business letter, using standard form.	*8	*8,19	*7	11,16,18	*4
Use the writing process to					
organize thoughts and ideas.	1,3,4	2,5,6,7,8,10,11, *5 16,17 18 19	6,9,11,12,14, 16 17 18 19	1,3,6,8,9,12,14, *6,17 19	1,6,8,9,10,11, *4 15
categorize details.	*9	7,8,9,15,16,17	2,11	1,2,3,7,9,12,17	*,3,8
develop a main idea.		4,5,6,7,8,10,11	2,8,9,11,13,14, 16 17 18 19	6,7,14,17	7,8,11,14
use supportive details, including sensory details.	4,8	1,2,9,10,11, *2,13	2,6,8,11,13,14	1,7,8,11,18,19	2,4,6,7,8,9,10, 11 12,14
use descriptive language.	1,2,3	2,11,12,13	6,11,12,13,14, *7 18,19	1,2,3,4,12,14 *7,18	2,3,6,7,11, *2,15
distinguish fact from opinion.					*5
assume a voice.	8	5,6,10,11	4,7,8,9,19	5,7	
construct or interpret an interview.		4,5,6			
use synonyms.		2,13	6,7,8,9		9,10,12
extend sentences by using subtraction or combining.	2,7	2,10,18,19	3,17	9,13,18	3,8,11,12,14
express another point of view		5,6	2	6	
proofread for grammar and usage.	4	4,10,15,16,17	9,16	9,13	13,14,15
proofread for capitalization.	4	4,10,15,16,17	9,16	9,13	13,14,15
proofread for punctuation.	4	4,10,15,16,17	9,16	9,13	13,14,15
use persuasive language.	8	5,6,15,16,17	2,4,6,7,8,9,17	18	4
debate an issue.		15,16,17	2,8		
write to compare/contrast.		12,15,16,17		1,2,3,4,8,17	*2
identify cause and effect.		15,16,17		12,17	6,15
sequence ideas or events.			1,11,12,13,14	6,12,13,17	2,8,11
make inferences.	5,8		3	6	11
draw conclusions.	5,8		3	6	11
predict outcome.				6	11
summarize.		12,14	12,13	2	
make judgements.	5,8	15,16,17	3		
identify/analyze/solve problems in written selections.			14		15
interpret relationships among parts.				13	
analyze character traits.				1,3,4,8,7,17	
narrow a topic.				17,19	4,11
revise sentences for style, diction and clarity.	4,5,6,7,8	5,8,10,15,16,17, 18,19	6,7,8,9,19	9,13,18	3,14,15
write for a specific audience.	8	5,8,8,10,11,15 16,17,18,19	2,7,8,9	9,14,16,18	14

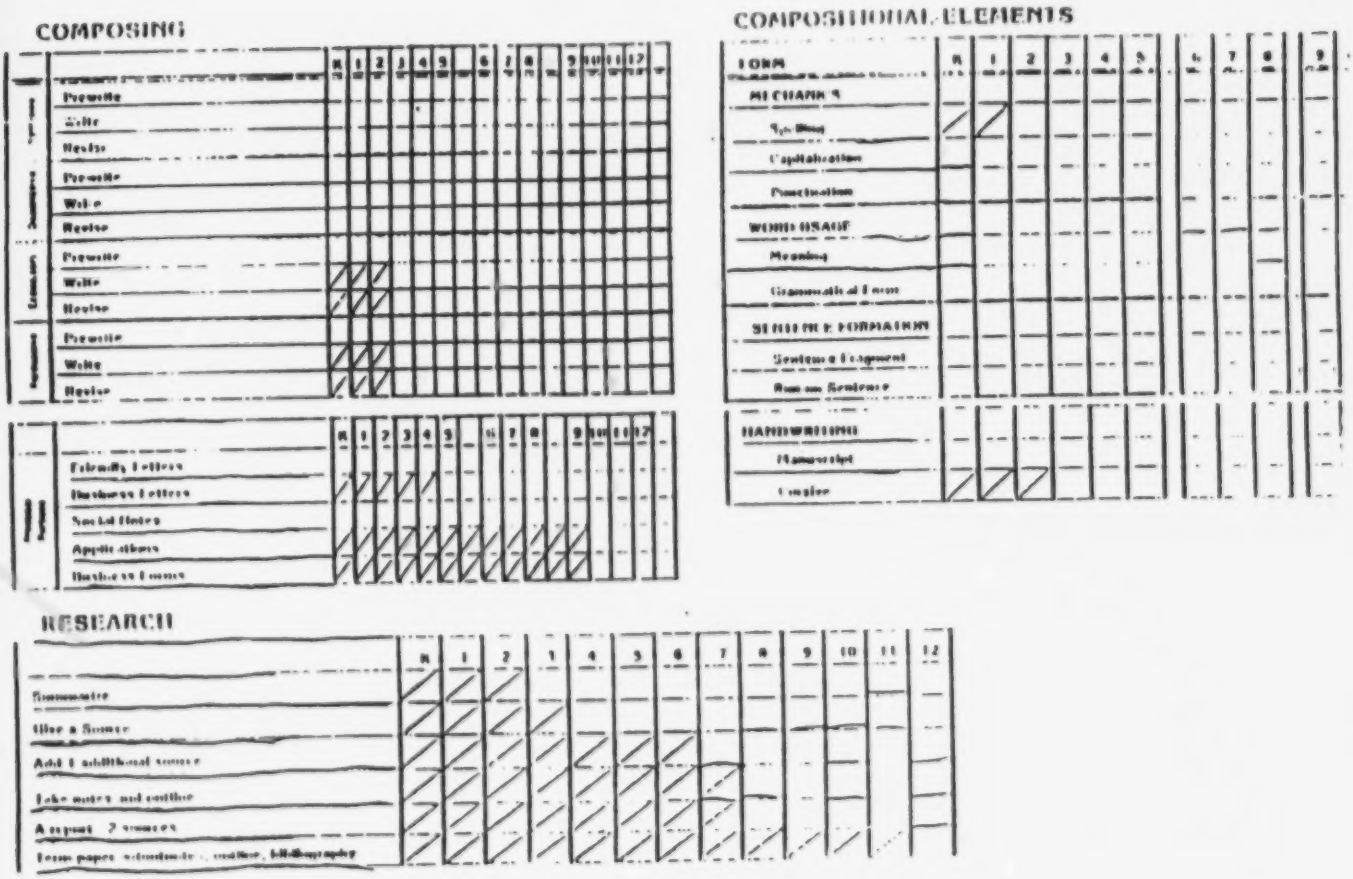
Record keeping is a necessity when teachers are accountable to the district administration and state agencies for teaching objectives that have been adopted for writing programs. Administrators can play an important role in reducing teacher time spent on record keeping by providing well-designed forms for student records.

In Kershaw County School District, SC, a teacher committee developed a simplified chart that meets state guidelines for accountability, yet is relatively easy to keep. This checklist, provided in **Figure 2.9**, is printed on the student's cumulative folder (checklists for other basic skills, such as reading, are also on the folder). Each teacher, in turn, indicates whether instruction has been provided and places one sample of the student's writing for that year in the folder. A sheet of directions is included, explaining, for example, which teacher keeps the records in cases where several teachers may provide instruction.

Figure 2.9

Student Cumulative Folder Writing Checklist
Kershaw County, SC

(Place a check in the box under the appropriate grade level beside each category for which instructions has been provided. This is not a mastery checklist.)



CLASSROOM PLANNING

When teachers new to teaching writing as problem solving begin planning for their classroom writing programs, they may need assistance in finding compatible planning structures. In **Figures 2.10** and **2.11** are two samples of teacher planning. The first sample gives the guiding assumptions and objectives for a combination fifth-sixth grade class in which the teacher initiated a new program integrating writing into all subject areas. The second example is a year-long plan designed by a district-wide committee to be used by individual primary-level teachers as a basis for classroom planning. This plan incorporates forms, topics, and processes of writing with the total language arts program. It meets statewide and district guidelines and incorporates objectives from existing textbooks and the California Test of Basic Skills testing program used in this district.

Figure 2.10

Guiding Assumptions and Objectives for a Fifth-Sixth Grade Writing Program in All Subjects

Overall Objective: The writing process approach and philosophy will be integrated into all subjects of the curriculum.

I am attempting to establish a writing program for my fifth and sixth graders that is integrated into all of their core classes. I am basing my program upon research done on the writing process approach by Donald Graves, Lucy Calkins, and other teacher/researchers. This program is based upon these assumptions:

1. Writing is an important social skill that students need to master in order to do well in the working world.

2. Writing allows children to express themselves and, in doing so, helps them to explore and better understand their life and experiences.

It is organized to meet the following objectives:

1. The students will be given many opportunities to write so that they may become more comfortable with writing.

2. The students will be encouraged to write about their own experiences.

3. The students will recognize writing as an ongoing process.

4. The students will be encouraged to see themselves as writers and, as such, decision makers.

5. The students will become familiar with and use the processes of writing, which include: prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing.

6. The students will experiment with writing different types of literature.

7. The students will work on their grammar and punctuation through the writing process.

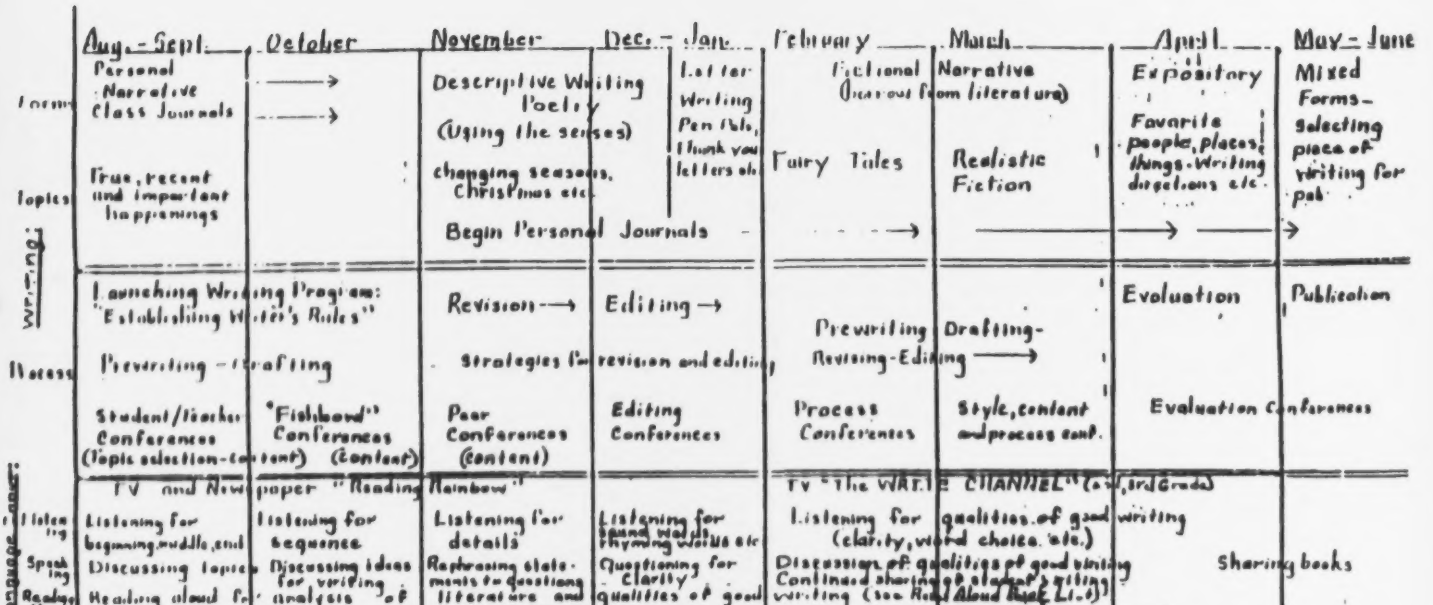
8. The students will establish their own standards of good writing.

9. The students will evaluate their own work and note their progress and their weaknesses.

Thanks to Cheryl Larson, Columbia, SC.

Figure 2.11

Year-Long Plan for Integrating Writing Into the Primary Grades Language Arts Program Lexington School District Two, West Columbia, SC



Lesson plan formats for teaching writing as problem solving will need to be different from those used for directed teaching through lecture or textbook assignments. A curriculum development committee that designs plans to share with colleagues may need to detail the processes of interaction in order to communicate successfully the intent and procedures of the lesson. Three sample formats, one used at the elementary level and two at the secondary level, are given in **Figures 2.11, 2.12,** and **2.13**. Each format includes the skills to be taught, forms and processes of writing, teaching suggestions, and materials. The first plan is for a problem-solving activity as suggested by Hillocks (see Chapter 1) to help students practice problems they will face in their writing at a later time. The second plan is for the editing phase of composition. The third plan includes all phases of the composing process, including evaluation.

Figure 2.12
Sample Lesson Plan for Lead Writing Activity Summer Youth Remediation Program, Mississippi Writing/Thinking Consortium

Focus	Workshop on Writing Leads
Preparation	Be prepared from staff development to model each type of lead for "I remember" sentence of your own. Write your examples on chart paper to hang on wall as you present each type of lead.
Materials	Prewritten charts; chart paper; markers; tape.
Instructional Processes	
Journal Writing (10-15 min.)	Conduct a workshop in writing leads. Give students these instructions: *Recall the last disagreement you had with your parent or guardian. Assume the voice of that person, and write an entry in your personal diary on that evening after the disagreement has taken place.* Invite volunteers to share.
Large Group **Prewriting (10-15 min.)**	Have students get out the list of "I remember" statements they wrote on Day 1, and choose a second one to write about. Model your own "I remember" sentence. Explain to students that a lead is the first sentence or first paragraph of a writing. It is the way a writer leads the reader into the writing and should be fresh enough and interesting enough to attract the reader's attention. Then model an example of each of the following leads for your sentence as demonstrated in staff development: 1. A direct statement 2. An anecdote 3. A quotation 4. Dialogue 5. Surprise 6. Mood List each type of lead on the chalkboard or on chart paper as you model them.
Individual Writing (10-20 min.)	Instruct each student to choose three of the seven leads demonstrated and to write an opening for the " I remember" sentence in those three different ways.
Large Group **Sharing (10-15 min.)**	Call on individuals to share their different leads with the class. It is important that all three leads by any one student be read so that students have a basis of comparison. Have the class pick the one of the three that they feel is most enticing to them as readers.

Figure 2.13

Sample Lesson Plan for Revising and Editing Summer Youth Remediation Program, Mississippi Writing/Thinking Consortium

Focus	Knowing a Friend
Preparation	Be prepared to model constructive/destructive criticism and model combining sentences using samples from the transitional word sheet.
Materials	Student drafts and response sheets; Spelling Checklist; Proofreading Checklist.
Instructional Processes	
Modeling (5-10 min.)	Model constructive/destructive criticism in response. Model combining sentences.
Individual Revision (10-15 minutes)	Instruct students to revise their papers using the response sheets. Also refer students to transitional sheet to aid in sentence combining.
Individual Proofreading (5 min.)	Direct students to use the Spelling and Proofreading Checklists for correctness.
Small-Group Response (15 min.)	Divide class into small groups. Ask students to read their revised papers to their groups and discuss the changes they have made. Each group will select a volunteer to read his or her revised paper to the class.
Large-Group Sharing (15 min.)	Have one student from each group read his/her paper. As each student finishes reading, ask the class to comment positively (using constructive criticism) about the use of descriptive details within the paper. Tell students to have a final neat draft of this paper written by Day 10.

Figure 2.14
Sample Lesson Plan Encompassing All Phases of the Writing Process

Objective:

To develop a class book of unique or unusual facts about each student.

Writing Task:

Write a paragraph containing personal facts that are special, unusual, or unique.

Prewriting:

1. Conduct a class discussion that points out that everyone is an individual and has a special, unusual, or unique personal fact to share. Examples include receiving a special award, being the first or only person to do something, having traveled to a special place, being related to a famous person or having a famous ancestor, having an unusual pet, having the ability to do an unusual task, or having an unusual physical feature.

2. Present two examples to the class, such as the following:

   - John Jones, born on May 21, 1969 in St. Louis, MO, is the only grandson in his family. He has three sisters. His father has one sister who has two daughters, and his mother's sister has three daughters. Jim's father was the only grandson in his generation, also.

   - Susan Smith and her brother and sister all share the same birthday. She was born on April 10, 1969. Her sister, Carol, was born in 1965, and her brother, John, is her twin. They were all born in Dallas, TX.

3. Ask the students to think of an unusual fact about themselves and write it down. Then have each student share his or her fact with a small group or with the entire class.

Composing:

Write a paragraph about a unique fact about oneself. Include personal facts and enough details to fully explain the unusual fact. Include the date and place of birth.

Intervention

Student can't think of any interesting facts.

Is there something special you can do? Did one of your relatives do something unusual? Have you been somewhere that no one else in the class has been? Have you ever seen a famous person in person? Does someone in your family have an unusual talent?

Student has not given a complete explanation of the fact.

How did you win this award? When and where did this happen? How did you discover that you had this talent?

Student writes only short choppy sentences.

Let's do some sentence-combining with some of these shorter sentences.

Student writes run-on sentences.

Look at this long sentence. How could you rewrite that into two shorter sentences?

Assessment/Revision/Proofing:

The teacher meets with each student to proofread for clarity, correct spelling, and grammar.

After all the revisions are made, the student writes the paragraph on an 8 1/2 X 11 sheet of white writing paper, using black felt-tipped pens. Below the paragraph, some illustration with markers will add color and interest to the page.

Evaluation:

Combine pages from all students into a book for the classroom or school library. If possible, laminate the pages to prevent tearing and fading.

If materials are available, the book could be reproduced to provide a copy for each student to keep.

From Ferguson-Florrisant School District. The Double Helix: Teaching the Writing Process. Ferguson, MI, 1982.

Student Perceptions Of Writing

As part of the continuing development of a writing program, interviews of student writers provide invaluable information. Students can teach us about their own writing processes and about their understanding of what writing is. Armed with these data, teachers can plan more responsive instructional strategies, and planning committees can identify areas needing further development. In many classrooms, interviews and written responses are a regular part of the instructional program, and teachers note that students become more aware of what it takes to be a good writer when their ideas are given importance.

Glatthorn suggests a survey form for use in secondary classes to solicit student evaluation of the adequacy of the writing program (Figure 2.15).

Figure 2.15
Survey Form for Student Perception of Writing Instruction

Directions: Below are several statements about how writing is taught in the English classroom. Read each statement carefully. Then decide how often that statement applies to your English class. Circle your answer.

Directions: **Below are several statements about how writing is taught in the English classroom. Read each statement carefully. Then decide how often that statement applies to your English class. Circle your answer.**

1. The writing I do for English class seems useful to me.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
2. In our English class,we can choose the topics we write about.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
3. My English teacher writes when we are asked to write.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
4. My English teacher encourages me to revise my writing.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
5. When I write for English class, I am given enough time to think about the topic and get the information I need.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
6. When preparing to write in English class, I am able to discuss ideas with my classmates.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
7. My English teacher gives me helpful criticism about the writing I have done.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
8. My English teacher praises me when I have written a good essay.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
9. My English teacher teaches us the skills we need to make our papers better.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
10. In our English class,we publish what we have written in classroom newspapers and magazines.	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never

From Allan A. Glatthorn. Writing in the Schools: Improvement Through Effective Leadership (p.17). Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1981.

3: Evaluation of Writing

I know good writing when I read it. So do you. But...knowing that writing is good is one thing. Determining exactly what makes writing good is more difficult. – Tom Liner, Inside Out

The most difficult questions teachers and administrators ask about writing instruction are about evaluating and grading. All phases of assessment are of concern to them, from grading individual papers to assessing whole programs.

Teachers' questions often arise from troublesome situations they do not know how to handle. They worry about putting comparative grades on what they view as creative written products, particularly at the elementary level. They notice that other teachers react differently to compositions than they do, finding strengths and weaknesses that were not important in their own response to the composition. They are troubled when students do not make use of their comments on papers but keep on making the same errors over and over again.

Above all, English/language arts teachers worry about the oppressive burden of correcting papers. They feel guilty when they don't respond to papers thoroughly enough. They feel guilty when they don't assign enough writing because they can't get around to responding to all of it. When they hear that the current research on teaching writing stresses the importance of frequent – even daily – writing experiences, they may feel that teaching writing is an impossible task.

Administrators are concerned about how to assess the results of their writing program. How effective is the school writing program? How can areas needing development be identified? They also wonder how to gather data to interpret the writing program to all the different audiences they must communicate with – the school board, central office, parents, and business community. How can they show the strengths of the program?

Fortunately, the research on teacher response to student writing has good news for English teachers. Grades, in and of themselves, are not crucial factors in student progress in learning to write. Other aspects of the instructional program and other kinds of teacher response are more important. In fact, it appears that not putting grades on individual papers often achieves better results than grading each paper. Evaluation strategies are available that reduce the long hours of correcting, yet still provide students with helpful responses to their writing.

At the program level, evaluation strategies are available for assessing effects of instruction. Research studies have indicated that when teachers receive training that helps them reflect on and objectify their criteria for responding to writing, they can evaluate student writing with high levels of reliability. In-service time can be used on workshop sessions in which teachers discuss their evaluative strategies and practice using alternative approaches. Many different quantitative and qualitative measures are available for use. Each of these measures has its own particular characteristics, appropriate for some purposes, but not for others.

In this chapter, evaluation approaches will be reviewed in relation to program goals and purposes. Then the recommendations for classroom evaluation of writing will be given, with emphasis on the broad range of teacher response to writing that is associated with successful composition programs. It is hoped that administrators and teachers will select and adapt from these samples to create useful approaches for their own purposes.

Determining Instructional Goals and Purposes For Evaluation

The selection of evaluative approaches depends on:

1. The goals of the composition program.
2. The purposes for evaluation.

When the goals of the program have been determined, evaluative approaches can be selected that best fit those goals. For example, if the program stresses qualitative features of writing, especially style, organization, and level of abstraction, then a qualitative assessment instrument that requires the use of actual student samples is necessary. Vocabulary knowledge, usage, and mechanics may be assessed by machine-scored, standardized measures, although this approach will not reveal the extent to which students actually include effective vocabulary choices and correct spelling and punctuation in their writing samples.

Different types of testing and scoring procedures are needed for different purposes. Consideration should be given to what kind of information is needed, such as data on general trends in the school as a whole (or at each grade level) or detailed information about each child's progress. Planners should begin with the question, "Who needs this information?" Some evaluative systems yield information that researchers can easily interpret but that would not be appropriate for parents.

In general, test results can be used in the following ways:

1. To report student progress to administrators.
2. To report progress to parents.
3. To identify the progress that students make over a period time.
4. To determine levels of student ability in order to place students in appropriate classes.
5. To diagnose specific strengths and weaknesses of individual students as a preliminary to providing individual or small group remedial instruction.
6. To identify the actual steps that students use as they prepare to write, then write, and revise their work.
7. To determine the effectiveness of a particular program or instructional method that is used.

Evaluation Alternatives

Holistic Evaluation

Holistic scoring provides a means for determining the effectiveness of a composition as a whole in relation to other similar compositions. It is based on the idea that the effectiveness of the whole composition is greater than its separate components, that no components should be judged apart from the whole, and that all components should – and can – be judged simultaneously (Myers, 1980; Hall, 1988; Najimy, 1981). Holistic scoring involves reading and scoring a paper on the total effect of the first impression. Papers are given a ranking, typically from 1 to 4 or from 1 to 6.

Holistic scoring is different from an individual teacher's impression of a composition. It involves a team approach in which scorers are given intensive training to come into agreement on their judgments. This training involves reading, scoring, and discussing a series of papers. As scorers review and discuss elements of each paper, they increase their ability to spot essential characteristics and become more objective in applying shared criteria to the papers.

Most holistic scoring procedures are "modified"; that is, they utilize a carefully developed set of criteria on which to base scoring. This set of criteria, or "rubric," guides the holistic judgments, so that one set of teachers at one time and place can make judgments similar to another group of teachers. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are examples of selected elements for modified holistic scoring and the

descriptive criteria for each level of ranking. In this case, the rubric, developed as part of the South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program, purposely omits criteria such as creativity, mature sentence formation, and accuracy of information, which might be appropriate in other program-level evaluations.

Figure 3.1

Compositional Elements for Modified Holistic Scoring (Descriptive Writing)

COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS	
____Purpose clearly identified	The composition describes something or someone using appropriate details.
____**Topic** on the assigned topic	The composition addresses the topic required by the writing task.
____**Audience** specified audience appropriately addressed	The tone of the composition and the language used are appropriate for the intended readers. (For example, slang could be used when writing to classmates, but not in writing to the principal.)
____ **Content** appropriate types of details sufficient amount of elaboration	The composition uses sensory and other relevant details The composition uses enough and varied details.
____**Organization** unified focus beginning, middle, and end smooth flow development	The entire composition is on one subject and does not wander. The composition introduces the topic to the reader, discusses the topic, and brings the topic to conclusion. The composition flows smoothly from idea to idea. The composition sufficiently develops the topic.
___ **Form** handwriting mechanics word usage sentence formation	The composition is legible. The punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are correct. Words are used in the appropriate context. There is subject-verb agreement, correct pronoun usage, etc. Sentences are complete with subjects and predicates. There are no run-ons or fragments.

From South Carolina Department of Education. Teaching and Testing Manual for Writing. Columbia, SC, 1987.

Figure 3.2
Modified Holistic Scoring Criteria for the South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program

4 points = A more than adequate response

- The composition is related to the assigned topic. It has a focus and is unified, and it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The composition is developed and flows smoothly from idea to idea.
- Errors in sentence formation, word usage, and mechanics may be present, but they do not detract from the overall impression of the composition.

3 points = An adequate response

- The composition is related to the assigned topic. It has a focus and is unified, and it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The composition does not present major obstacles for the reader in moving from idea to idea.
- Errors in sentence formation, word usage, and mechanics may be present, but they do not substantially detract from the overall impression of the composition.

2 points = A less than adequate response

- The composition is related to the assigned topic. It is somewhat focused and unified; it may lack a beginning, a middle, or an end. The composition may present obstacles for the reader in moving from idea to idea.
- Errors in sentence formation, word usage, and mechanics are frequent enough to detract from the overall impression of the composition.

1 point = A very inadequate response

- The composition is related to the assigned topic. It lacks focus and is disorganized. The composition is very difficult to follow.
- Errors in sentence formation, word usage, and mechanics are frequent and serious enough to detract substantially from the overall impression of the composition.

0 points = A response that cannot be evaluated

- The composition is illegible, is totally unrelated to the topic, or contains an insufficient amount of writing to evaluate.

Blank = A paper should not be assigned a score

- If the response is missing or if certain circumstances exist such as teacher intervention, there is no score assigned to the paper.

From South Carolina Department of Education. Teaching and Testing Manual for Writing, Columbia, SC, 1987.

The uses and advantages of holistic scoring can be summarized as follows:

1. It gives the school district a reliable and efficient method for evaluating large numbers of student writing samples. The general level of student writing can be compared between classes, between schools, or, if consistent procedures are used, with other districts or nationally established rankings (such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress).

2. When teachers are trained to do holistic evaluation, they usually internalize the features of good writing and use this evaluation approach in their classroom in grading practices. A school faculty can use the shared criteria to create consistency in their grading practices.

3. Students can be trained to use holistic scoring informally, leading to heightened awareness and internalization of criteria for good writing.

The disadvantages of holistic scoring are:

1. The scoring process does not provide information about areas of strength and weakness in student writing. It therefore is not an effective means of providing diagnostic information for individual students.

2. The process of training, collecting samples, and scoring is time- consuming and requires a strong commitment from administration and teachers.

Analytic Evaluation

Analytic scoring of student papers involves attention to specific elements of each paper: the sentence structure, the organization, the punctuation, spelling, and so on. In large-scale evaluation programs, scorers are trained to use a checklist of carefully defined elements to make their judgments. Sometimes points are assigned. Analytic scoring is often combined with holistic scoring to provide summarized diagnostic information for students who fall below designated standards.

Teachers score analytically when they mark spelling errors, correct an error in agreement, or point out that an idea is too vague or a paragraph is disorganized. Unfortunately, in the classroom, analytic scoring can encourage an over-emphasis on the weaknesses of student writing, rather than a balanced description. Appropriately used, analytic evaluation provides opportunities to describe a paper's specific strengths and weaknesses as a basis for planning future instruction or grouping.

Figure 3.3 is a detailed checklist for analyzing six different areas of student writing – ideas/content, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling, and handwriting (Hall, 1988). This type of checklist is particularly useful because it provides realistic alternatives under each category. For example, the information (or ideas) in a composition can be expressed in many different ways, through humor, logic, detailed descriptions, and so on. Any single required list of how content should be handled would be appropriate for some compositions, but not others. Different factors must be considered, depending on whether the writing is narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive, or personal/expressive. The nine items under the category "Ideas/Content" are not intended to be requirements, but appropriate available alternatives. A faculty might use such a list to develop their own checklist based on the goals and objectives of their program.

Figure 3.3

Writing Checklist for Analytic Scoring of Student Papers

Primary Trait Evaluation

Another approach to evaluating student compositions is especially useful to evaluate writing that has particular characteristics, such as letters, persuasive essays, or science reports. In this approach, a checklist is prepared based on selected characteristics of this type of writing, and the compositions are rated based on these characteristics. An example of how primary trait evaluation is used in the classroom is the rating scale for persuasive letters given in Figure 3.4. The sample, used in the eighth grade, includes secondary characteristics that are general to all writing, as well as the criteria expected for persuasive letters.

Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Title of writing sample _____ Draft # ___ / Final

	low		middle		high
1. Ideas / Content	2	4	6	8	10
____ interesting title ____ catch reader's interest ____ clear topic, theme or storyline ____ clear purpose (to entertain, to inform, to report, to explain, to persuade) ____ consistent point of view ____ originality, creativity, imagination ____ personal style ____ humor ____ unique features					
2. Organization	2	4	6	8	10
____ good introduction ____ topic sentences . . . main ideas ____ supporting information: facts, details, examples quotes, definitions, comparisons observations using senses (no irrelevant information) ____ clear sequence of ideas, events or clear story line ____ paragraph format ____ good conclusion					
3. Vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
____ specific nouns ____ specific adjectives and adverbs ____ specific verbs ____ imaginative use of words: originality invented words, puns, alliteration, similes, metaphors (no clichés, slang, or overused words, no wordiness)					
4. Sentence Structure	1	2	3	4	5
____ complete sentences (no fragments, no run-ons, no awkward constructions) ____ variety of sentence lengths: simple, compound, complex, compound-complex ____ variety of sentence types: statements, questions, exclamations ____ consistency of verb tense ____ correct use of pronouns ____ correct capitalization and punctuation					
5. Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
6. Handwriting	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 3.4

Primary Trait Scoring Guide for Persuasive Letters

Persuasive Letter Evaluation

Primary Trait Scoring Guide:

3 This letter clearly states what is wanted and why, anticipates objections, and meets them with logical arguments. It probably would persuade your audience, because the arguments are presented in a tone suited to them.

2 This letter presents persuasive arguments but does not anticipate the possible reactions of your audience. It might persuade them, but then again it might not.

1 This letter would probably not persuade your audience, since it is not presented in a tone suited to your audience and does not anticipate possible reactions or meet them with specific arguments.

Secondary Trait Scoring Guide

2X This letter follows proper letter format; is neat and easy to read; and has no errors in spelling, mechanics, or usage. A letter like this is a pleasure to receive. Your audience will be impressed with your writing skills.

1X This letter follows most of proper letter format, but it is not as neat and easy to read. It has a few errors in spelling, mechanics, or usage. If your primary trait score is high, your audience still might be persuaded.

0X This letter is not neat or easy to read. It has many errors in spelling, mechanics, or usage. Even if your primary trait score is high, your audience probably would not do what you want them to since they might not be able to read it.

From International School of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, West Africa. n.d.

Using Student Writing To Evaluate School Composition Programs

As was discussed in the previous chapter, goals and objectives for writing programs are typically organized in three different areas:

- Forms and purposes of writing.
- Writing processes.
- Criteria of writing effectiveness.

Evaluation of student writing can contribute to program assessment in each of these areas. For most forms of writing, holistic scoring is usually the preferred method for obtaining an overall understanding of the effectiveness of the writing program. All students or a sample of students can be included. To provide diagnostic information about students who fall below standards, analytical scoring can be completed on a selected sample of students. To assess the effectiveness of a major program development or to identify specific areas of strength and weakness of an already developed program, analytic scales that identify strengths can be used.

Supplementary scoring of selected types of writing according to a school-constructed primary trait scale may be needed to assess programs in appropriately special subject areas such as science or business education. It is important, however, not to overburden teachers with an overly ambitious assessment program. School evaluation procedures should be limited to what can be managed by school staff during regularly scheduled staff development days.

Several publications, such as those listed in the reference, provide detailed directions for school writing evaluation, with emphasis on holistic scoring. Central office and state evaluation personnel can also be of assistance. The procedures will begin with planning and implementing procedures for collecting writing samples from students. Figure 3.5 illustrates sample prompts that could be adapted according to the interests, life experiences, and ages of the students being tested.

Modified holistic criteria are developed or adapted by a teacher committee, and an initial scoring session on a small set of papers is conducted for the purpose of selecting "anchor papers" – student papers that help define the upper and lower limits of the points on the rating scale. Teachers then are given time to rate and discuss these anchor papers so they can internalize the holistic scale (Myers, 1980). The extent of agreement needed depends on the purpose of the evaluation. If the purpose is primarily in-service training for teachers, they need only to come to general agreement on the criteria. For a more formal program assessment, stringent requirements for agreement are needed, and often it is helpful to proceed with the more experienced and interested teachers who are most successful in internalizing the criteria.

In the scoring sessions, each paper receives two readings. If the scores differ by more than one point, a third reading is suggested. Again, choices are available depending on the purpose of the evaluation effort. If program assessment is the purpose, not every student's paper need be read. If individual student placement is needed, of course, all students must be included.

A consultant from a local college, district office, or state department of education can be helpful in planning appropriate procedures.

Figure 3.5
Sample Writing Prompts for Holistic Writing Assessment

Narration

Imagine that you have just spent a relaxing afternoon. Now you are going to write, telling your classmates what happened during that afternoon.

Before you start writing, you might want to think about what made the afternoon seem relaxing. Think about what you did during the afternoon. Think about how your afternoon ended.

Now write your composition, telling your classmates what happened during your afternoon.

Exposition

Your local park is planning a Halloween celebration. The park director, Mr. Green, has asked for your ideas on how to make the celebration a success. You are going to write a letter to Mr. Green explaining what you think would make the celebration in the park fun for everyone in your town.

Before you start writing, you might want to think about the way to make a Halloween celebration special. Thank about the kinds of activities the different people in your town would enjoy. Think about the ways to decorate the park. Think about how Mr. Green could encourage people to participate in the celebration.

Now write a letter to Mr. Green, explaining what you think would make a Halloween celebration in the park fun for everyone in your town.

From South Carolina Department of Education. Teaching and Testing Manual for Writing. Columbia, SC. 1987.

Observation Of Writing Processes To Evaluate School Composition Programs

An observational approach is useful to assess student writing processes. Glatthorn (1981) has developed observational forms especially designed for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of writing programs at all grade levels.

Using an observation form such as the ones provided in **Figures 3.6** and **3.7**, peer observers and teachers can work together to provide linkages between what the teacher intended to have happen and what actually occurred in the classroom. This kind of observation can help a teacher gather data on his/her own teaching and provide the basis for faculty discussions of the status of their writing program. It is important, of course, that such an observation not be conducted for the purpose of official teacher evaluation.

For younger students in the elementary school an observation form such as the one given in Figure 3.8 can be used by teachers on a sample of students to evaluate their instructional strategies related to writing processes. Include in the sample of students all achievement levels to give information on different groups of students in the classroom. Based on data from such an observation form, teachers can identify specific objectives to address in continuing program development. When used by teachers across grade levels, it can also assist in creating a coherent school program in which each grade level builds on and adds to what has gone before.

Figure 3.6

Guide for Observing the Teaching of the Exploring and Planning Stages of the Composing Process

Teacher's Name _____ Date of Observation _____ Class _____

Observer _____

Objective	Teacher's Intent	Observer's Perception	Teacher Activity	Student Behavior Indicating Success	Student Behavior Suggesting Problems
1. Stimulate interest in particular writing assignment.					
2. Help students explore subject, topic, audience, purpose, voice.					
3. Help students retrieve, systematize needed information.					
4. Help students develop and apply both divergent and convergent thinking skills needed in prewriting stage.					
5. Help students decide on content and organization and make appropriate written plans.					
6. Other _____					

From Allan A. Glatthorn. Writing in the Schools: Improvement Through Effective Leadership (p. 59). Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1981.

Figure 3.7

Guide for Observing the Teaching of the Revising and Sharing Stages of the Composing Process

Teacher's Name _____ Date of Observation _____ Class _____

Observer _____

Objective	Teacher's Intent	Observer's Perception	Teacher Activity	Student Behavior Indicating Success	Student Behavior Suggesting Problems
1. Help students edit each other's work.					
2. Help class understand common writing problems and make appropriate revisions.					
3. Give individual students the assistance they need in making revisions.					
4. Help students share their writing with each other.					
5. Help students prepare manuscripts for final submission and/or publication.					
6. Other _____					

From Allan A. Glatthorn. Writing in the Schools: Improvement Through Effective Leadership (p. 62). Reston, VA: National Associates of Secondary School Principals, 1981.

Figure 3.8

Observation of Student Writing Processes, Grades One-Six

Name _____ Teacher _____ Date _____

	Usually	Sometimes	Never
A. Rehearsing and Planning			
1. uses pictures to rehearse			
2. uses individual thinking time			
3. talks with others			
4. uses charts, "maps," and lists			
5. uses large and small group			
6. plans details and style of content			
7. plans organization of ideas			
B. Drafting			
1. views first drafts as tentative			
2. writes fluently with confidence			
3. makes changes during drafting			
4. shares drafts with others			
C. Revising			
1. adds information/clarifies information			
2. changes the focus of content			
3. improves organization			
4. adds interest/improves style			
5. improves sentences			
6. finds more effective words			
7. deletes unnecessary information			
8. discusses potential revision with peers			
9. refers to other authors' work			
D. Editing			
1. corrects punctuation and capitalization at current language level			
2. identifies misspellings at current level			
3. corrects usage errors			
4. indents paragraphs			
5. corrects headings, margins, etc.			
6. re-writes legibly			

(table continues)

	Usually	Sometimes	Never
E. Sharing/Publishing			
1. enjoys sharing drafts and revisions	____	____	____
2. prepares work for publication	____	____	____
3. is proud of published writing	____	____	____
4. praises the work of peers	____	____	____
F. Evaluation			
1. can describe own strengths/weaknesses	____	____	____
2. can analyze own texts	____	____	____
3. can report own writing process	____	____	____

What Research Says About Evaluating Writing

The results of current research on the relationship between evaluative practices and improved quality of student writing stress that when teachers can emphasize strategies that focus on student internalization of the qualities of effective and correct writing instead of strategies that focus on correction of individual products, students make more progress in learning to write (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1985; Hillocks, 1987; Beachand Bridwell, 1984; Atwell, 1987).

Specifically, some of the recommendations for teachers include:

1. Grading individual papers is not necessary for improvement in student writing – and may even be counterproductive. The compositions, even of good student writers, vary greatly in quality, especially, it appears, in periods of rapid growth in writing skill. Individual grading of papers, especially with emphasis on error counts and rigid averaging for a final grade, can discourage student motivation to write and provide an inaccurate picture of student achievement.

2. Intensive marking of student writing, with or without corrections, has not proven to result in improved quality of writing. Moderate marking, with emphasis on patterns of related errors, can be effective especially when combined with one-to-one conferences about one or two kinds of errors at a time.

3. Comments about the strengths of the writing are essential. In some studies, when only positive comments were written on student papers, students made more progress than when both strengths and weaknesses were marked. It appears that this may be especially true for low- achieving students.

4. Teacher comments on papers should be related to previous teaching. Students often do not use teacher comments because they do not understand concretely what they mean.

5. Students need teacher responses that give assistance in finding alternative solutions to problems in their writing.

6. Oral sharing of papers with teacher and peers is an effective method of helping students focus on strengths and weaknesses in their papers. However, the results of peer evaluation of papers are mixed (Freedman, 1987).

7. The use of lists of criteria in instruction and evaluation is effective, especially when students use these lists independently as part of revision and evaluation procedures.

8. Portfolio grading, in which revised drafts are compared, is an effective alternative to grading individual papers.

When faculties begin a review of their evaluative procedures, it is helpful to examine the current research on evaluation, especially from the viewpoint of the particular students and grade levels involved. The use of a set of criteria such as is presented in **Figure 3.9** can assist in reviewing the current status of evaluation in the school and stimulate teacher discussion. The issues addressed in this response form are wide-ranging, from determining purposes to procedures used in the classroom.

The manner in which the objectives to be assessed and the standards for student attainment are stated are important influences on evaluation procedures. Objectives and standards should be closely correlated with the goals of the writing program and should be consistent with what is known about students' cognitive and linguistic growth as shown in **Figure 3.10**. The generalized guidelines for evaluating student writing that are given reflect the district commitment to qualities of meaningful communication such as organization, clarity, elaboration, higher order thinking, and mature lan-

guage use. These general guidelines are then translated into grade-level guidelines for holistic scoring such as those presented in **Figure 3.11** for grades nine and ten.

Figure 3.9
Judging the Writing Constructively: Assessing the Effectiveness of Writing Evaluation in a School Writing Program

How effective is your writing program in the composing process in providing for:

1. Self-evaluation at each stage in the composing process?
2. Strategies that will prepare students to evaluate their own writing?
3. Peer evaluation of each student's writing?
4. Training to enable students to evaluate effectively the writing of their peers?
5. The determination of the purpose of an evaluation effort?
6. The selection of the most appropriate means for conducting an evaluation, such as holistic, analytical, or primary trait scoring?
7. Policies that reflect consistent and regular assessment of varied writing tasks?
8. The use of student writing samples as a primary means of evaluating their writing?
9. Teacher staff development in the evaluation of student writing?

From California State Department of Education. Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program. Sacramento, CA, 1982.

Figure 3.10
A Model for Evaluation of Writing Based on Student Ability to Communicate a Clear Message

Level 1	Not an understandable, completed message.
Level 2	An understandable message, but grossly deficient in language skills.
Level 3	Not competent in one or more grade-level skills.
Level 4	Competent for the grade level.
Level 5	Demonstrates higher order skills such as interpretation, vocabulary, and sentence structure.
Level 6	Exhibits interpretive or creative thinking.
Level 7	Exhibits sustained excellence of expression.

From R. McCaig, "A District-Wide Plan for the Evaluation of Student Writing," in Shirley Haley-James, ed. Perspectives on Writing in Grades 1-8. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981.

Figure 3.11

Evaluation Criteria for Levels of Writing in Grades 9 and 10

Level 1—Not competent: Content is inadequate for the topic selected, or deficiencies in the conventions of written expression are so gross that they interfere with communication.

Level 2—Not competent: The student can express a message that can be readily understood, contains adequate content for the selected topic, and demonstrates at least marginal command of sentence sense. The writing, however, is grossly deficient in one or more of these skills, judged by the standards appropriate for high school: spelling, usage, and punctuation and capitalization.

Level 3—Marginally competent: The student can compose a completed series of ideas about a topic with a minimum of gross deficiencies in spelling, usage, or punctuation, judged by standards appropriate for high school. The writing, however, does not contain at least one competent paragraph or is not competent in one or more of the following skills, judged by standards appropriate for high school: sentence sense, spelling, usage, and punctuation and capitalization.

Level 4—Competent: The student can compose a completed series of ideas about a topic with basic skills at a level appropriate for high school and with at least one competent paragraph. The writing, however, does not demonstrate all of the characteristics of highly competent writing:

- Good overall organization
- Competent paragraphing
- Regular use of transitions
- Good sentence structure
- Good vocabulary
- Appropriate use of subordination
- Interpretive meaning (as opposed to literal writing)

Level 5—Highly competent: The student can compose a completed series of ideas about a topic with basic skills at a level appropriate for high school and with the characteristics of highly competent writing listed above. The writing does not, however, demonstrate thesis development and does not contain critical or creative thinking.

Level 6—Superior: The student can compose a completed series of ideas about a topic with excellent basic skills, with the characteristics of highly competent writing, with adequate thesis development, and with at least one passage demonstrating critical or creative thinking. The passage of superior writing, however, tends to be an isolated example.

Level 7—Superior: The student can compose a completed series of ideas about a topic with excellent basic skills, with critical or creative thinking, and with a sustained vitality and richness of expression.

From R. McCaig "A Distict-Wide Plan for the Evaluation of Student Writing," in Shirley Haley-James, ed., Perspectives on Writing in Grades 1-8, Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981, p. 78.

Classroom Evaluation: Teacher and Peer Response To Writing

A person's best writing is often all mixed up together with his worst. It all feels lousy to him as he's writing, but if he will let himself write it and come back later he will find some parts of it are excellent.... What our students need first is for us to help them to see their best words that are usually hidden in their worst. Save the...criticism until later. – Peter Elbow, Writing Without Teachers

Providing time for students to write is not sufficient by itself to promote students' growth as writers. Teachers must also provide many opportunities for students to address the important problems of forming ideas into written language. Students are not always aware of what they have written. They do not know whether it is effective or has weaknesses to be corrected. They need assistance from teachers in learning to focus on specific parts of their writing in a way that reinforces their confidence, yet helps them learn new skills.

As was reported in Chapter 1, Hillocks' major review of writing instruction found that teachers had very good results from using checklists of writing criteria with students – if, of course, these criteria were used to stimulate student discussion and reflection, not just as rote rules for writing.

When teachers are in the process of changing their approaches to evaluation of writing, they will want to review the procedures and criteria used by other teachers as an aid in constructing their own approaches. In some situations, especially at the beginning of the school year or for very insecure writers, an open-ended response is appropriate. Figure 3.12 is a sample of such a form, used to give students definite written feedback and goals to work on in the future, but without the constraints of a list of criteria. **Figure 3.13** shows a different approach. In this case, the criteria for the program are listed as a basis for evaluating elementary school student samples as they practice writing in the same situation they will face in the state testing program. These criteria could be used in a student response form to indicate strengths and weaknesses with space for teacher comments. Another approach is to create a blank form, such as the Editing Checklist in **Figure 3.14**, and add items (end punctuation, subject-verb-agreement) as they are taught.

Many teachers report that student response groups are more task-oriented when they are required to complete a written form as part of their response to writing. **Figure 3.15** is a sample of such a form.

Figure 3.12
Form for Recording Open-Ended Responses to Student Papers

Student's Name _____ Date _____

Title _____

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Matters To Work On In Next Paper:

Additional Comments:

From R. W. Reising, "Controlling the Bleeding," College Composition and Communication, 24 (February 1973), pp. 43-44.

Figure 3.13

Modified Holistic Scoring Criteria Used to Respond to Student Papers (Descriptive Writing)

Composition Elements

Organization:

_____Unified Focus

_____Beginning and End

_____Flows Smoothly From Idea to Idea

Content:

_____On the Assigned Topic

_____Has Sufficient Appropriate Details

_____Has Elaboration for Details

Audience:

_____The Specified Audience Is Appropriately Addressed

Form:

_____Mechanics

_____Word Usage

_____Sentence Formation

From South Carolina Department of Education. Teaching and Testing Manuals for Writing. Columbia, SC, 1987.

Figure 3.14

Editing Checklist Form

Name _____ Name of Co-Editor _____

Date _____

Title of Piece _____

EDITING CHECKLIST	SELF EDIT	CO EDIT

FINAL EDITING NOTES _____

Thanks to Shelley Harwayne, Brooklyn Writing Program, NY.

Figure 3.15

Peer Response Recording Form

Your Name _____ Date _____

Writer's Name _____

Topic: _____

_____

Content response: Listening to Paper

Two strengths for you

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

Two weaknesses for you

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____

Editing Response: Looking at Paper

Constructions you question:

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____
3. _____
_____
4. _____
_____

Spelling you question:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Thanks to Carolyn Lowe, Irmo High School, Columbia, SC.

Another problem area for teachers who are in the process of learning the skills of teaching writing as a problem-solving activity is giving effective responses to students in conferences. Schools can schedule in-service workshops in which teachers share responses they have found to be effective and review informal videotapes teachers have made of themselves in conferences with students. Nancie Atwell (1986) provides some sample responses to typical questions that arise in her eighth grade classroom:

Questions That Can Help

Situation	Conference Approaches
The piece is unfocused: it covers several or many diffe[illegible] days, events, ideas, etc.	Do you have more than one story here? What's the most important thing you're trying to say? What's your favorite part? How can you build on it?
Situation	Conference Approaches
There isn't enough information in the piece.	I don't understand. Please tell me more about your topic. How could you find out more about your topic? Is all this information important to your reader? What parts don't you need?
There's too much information in the piece.	
The piece is a list of events and includes little of the writer's reflections.	How did you feel when this happened? What do you think about this? Why is this significant to you?
The lead holds the reader at arm's length, going on about contextual details, rather than introducing the writer's thesis.	Does this lead bring your reader right into the piece?Where does your piece really begin? Can you delete other information and begin there instead?
	What do you want your reader to know or feel at the end of your piece? Does this conclusion do it? Where does your piece really end?
The conclusion is either too sudden or drags on and on.	
There are no or few direct quotes in a piece in which people talk.	What can you do to show how these people spoke, so your reader can hear their voices?
You want to bring closure to the conference and understand what the student is taking away from the conference situation.	What do you think you'll do next?

Before a teacher responds to a paper, it is helpful to ask students to share their own evaluation of elements in the paper. **Figure 3.16** is a sample of a student response form useful for middle and secondary school students for drafts and finished work.

Figure 3.16

Student Self-Evaluation Form

Please answer these questions for each paper you turn in.

1. What did you learn from this piece of writing?

2. What do you intend to do in the next draft? Or, what would you work on if you had more time?

3. What surprised you in this (or the last) draft?

4. Where is the piece of writing taking you?

5. What do you like best in the piece of writing?

6. What questions do you have of me?

From Carolyn Matelene, University of South Carolina, adapted from Don Murray, n.d.

4: Writing In Content Subjects

If you can't put it into English, it means you don't understand it yourself. – Jerrold Zacharias, Physicist

Recently there has been much interest in writing across the curriculum. A high school biology teacher told me that for her it was because she got tired of talking to blank faces. Now that Jean stops during class for students to write out ideas in their own words in journals, her students are more actively involved in the class. At first, she believed she was getting behind in the material that she had to cover, but then she realized that she didn't have to spend so much time reviewing. The reports of teachers like Jean have spurred interest in writing as a part of content subjects at every level of schooling from elementary through college.

Writing assists thinking because it requires the mind to organize images, feelings, and information in a personal form, and it allows students to capture these thoughts for future consideration. Teachers from the Los Angeles Community College District (Simmons, 1983) compiled the following ways that writing operated to assist thinking in their classrooms. Their observations are similar to those of teachers at all levels.

- **Writing makes learning active.** No longer only receivers of information, students must originate, synthesize, and produce.
- **The act of writing imprints learning on the mind and in the memory.** The use of so many senses – kinesthetic in the physical act of writing, auditory as the students listen to their inner voice, and visual as they create a graphic record before their very eyes – all reinforce the concepts being learned.
- **The written record that is produced is "visible permanent, and available for instant review" (Cooper, 1980).** Concepts can be clarified, corrected, and elaborated in a way that oral language does not allow.
- **Writing gives the students unique access to their previous knowledge and experiences.** It calls forth, as nothing else does, what is already stored in the brain; it mines the depths, sending up nuggets that the students may not know they had until they wrote.
- **Writing facilitates the learning of complex material.** Like a digestive enzyme, writing can break down new, difficult concepts into absorbable components. Students make unfamiliar information their own and connect it to what they already know.
- **Writing improves reading.** It demands close reading of the text and familiarizes students with certain modes, for example, explaining a process or defining, which they practice in their writing and then recognize in their reading.

Teachers have noticed other positive results of writing their classrooms. In his middle-school mathematics class, Kennedy (1985) observed that free writing about math brought to the surface student fears in a way that enabled him to help students relax and keep trying. "I can't do math," wrote a sixth- grade girl. "I've never been able to do it. My mom says not to worry – she could never do it either."

Other teachers report the enormous potential for diagnosis when students put ideas in their own words or report their personal reactions to class experiences. Writing can reveal conceptual

problems, misunderstandings, and weaknesses in preparation, as well as individual insights and enthusiasms that otherwise would remain hidden.

Haley-James (1982) believes that informal writing experiences stimulate students to engage in further communication, sharing their ideas orally or rewriting to make ideas clear to someone else. The drive to communicate energizes the class and stimulates recollection and inspection of thought to further enhance learning.

The purposes for writing about subject matter vary according to the differing structure of the discipline and the nature of the current learning situation. Haley-James summarizes six alternative purposes that are applicable to all subject areas. (For a more specific application of similar purposes for writing to secondary social studies, see **Figure 4.1.**) These purposes are:

- **Writing to gain access to what is known.** Often writing is not for the purpose of communicating with others; it is, rather, writing to learn. Free writing, journal entries, semantic maps, brainstorming, and listing help students to review content, clarify concepts, organize their thoughts, or prepare to write. **Figure 4.2** is an example of a "map" used by a secondary student in preparation for a written report on the concept of radiation.

- **Writing to preserve and express ideas and experiences.** Preserving and expressing ideas and experiences can play an important role in students' lives, as well as contributing to learning in content subjects. When students write to communicate personal meanings to others, they develop a commitment to the topic and to learning.

- **Writing to inform others.** To inform others, students must know something themselves. Information can be conveyed in various forms: written reports, instructions, directions, articles, letters, and annotated bibliographies.

- Writing to persuade others. Persuasive writing is a valuable tool in any content area. Students who write persuasive letters to government officials about preservation of endangered species or prepare a petition to the governor for support for the arts learn by writing to persuade. When they are unsuccessful, they have an opportunity to review their content. Perhaps they have not thought their points through or organized them effectively.

- **Writing to transact business.** When teachers link their content areas to interesting happenings in the outside world, their teaching is more effective. Writing is a natural way to make this link. As students order supplies for a chemistry experiment or correspond with an author, they think about or act on the content they are studying.

- **Writing to entertain.** Stories, poems, and scripts are remarkably versatile. They involve information, experiences, point of view, and imagination. The possibilities for creating well-researched, humorous, and imaginative compositions are endless, as are the possibilities for internalizing concepts and factual information by using them while developing and discussing these creative products. – (adapted from Haley-James, 1981)

From R. McCaig "A District-Wide Plan for the Evaluation of Student Writing," in Shirley Haley-James, ed., Perspectives on Writing in Grades 1-8. Urbana, Il.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981, p. 78.

Figure 4.1

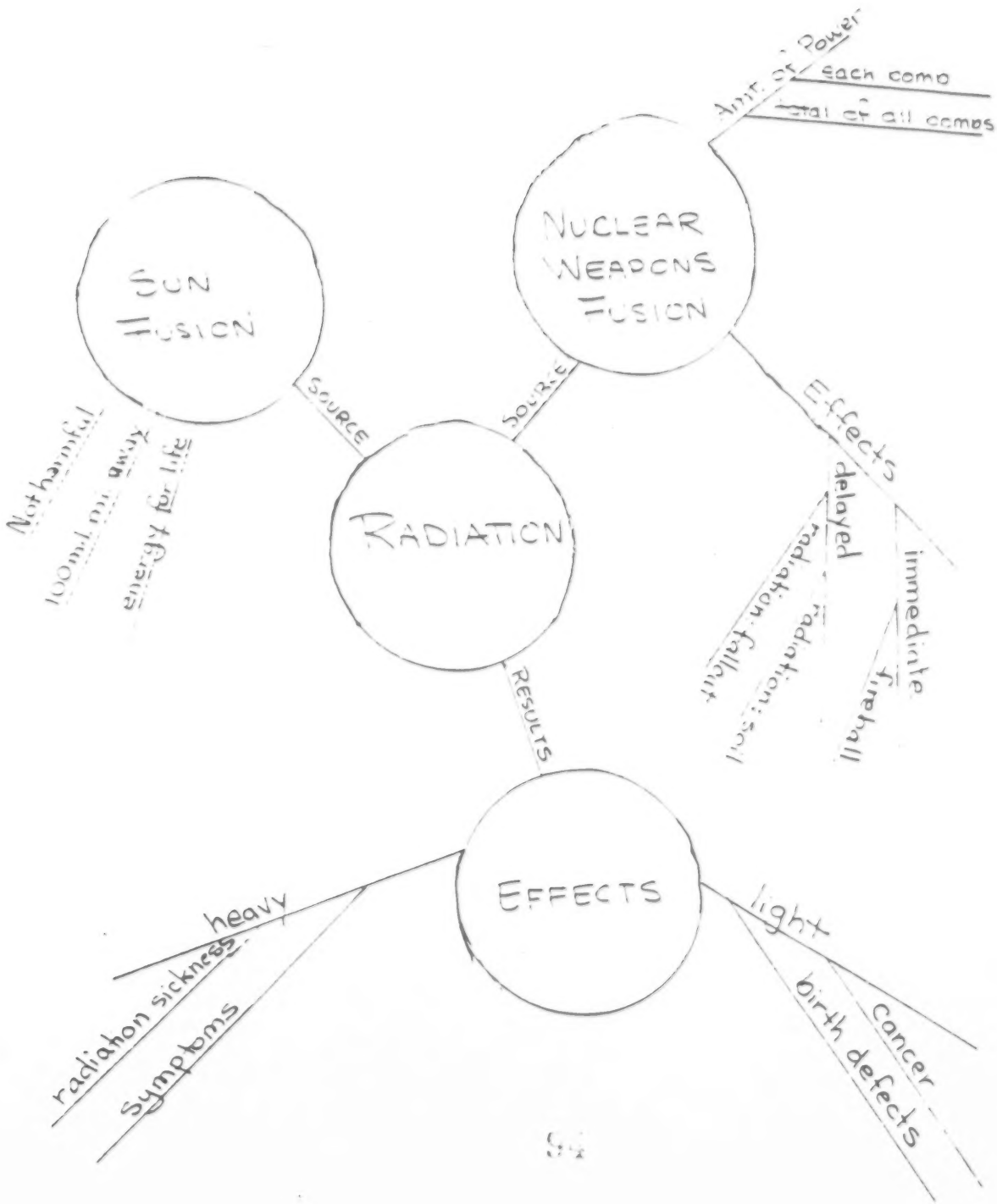
How Writing Can Be Used to Learn Content and Skills in Social Studies

1. Writing to Invent Hypotheses: As an initiating activity, students write before studying content to:
   - Invent a specific hypothesis for further testing by more detailed studying or reading.
   - State a position on a topic.
2. Writing to Generate New Knowledge: Students develop new insights as they manipulate content. Some ideas are:
   - Write and rewrite on the same topic from different points of view.
   - Students share their writing orally.
3. Writing to Conceptualize: Students move from writing descriptive statements to analytical statements to evaluative statements on the same topic as they move through a course of study:
   - From concrete examples to the general theme or concept embodied.
4. Writing to Reinforce Learning: Students explain what the content means in a more personal way. Some ideas are:
   - Write an explanation of an event (Civil War) or a condition (life of a professional athlete, worker in a certain industry, farm life) to a younger and less well-informed audience.
   - Evaluate a historic figure from the point of view of another figure.
5. Writing to Develop Empathy: Students develop empathetic understanding of a condition, group of people, or period of time:
   - Americans of historical importance and the principles for which they stood can be approached through use of a newspaper article or an obituary.
   - Students can later assume the identity of the subject to "get deeper" into the assumed personage and period of time.

Adapted from Barry K. Beyer, "Using Writing to Learn Social Studies," The Social Studies May/June 1982.

Figure 4.2

Student Mapping of the Topic of "Radiation" as a Study Strategy



JOURNALS AND LEARNING LOGS

A learning log, sometimes called a subject journal, is an informal student journal in which students write their thoughts related to the class. The writing is semiprivate, usually ungraded, so students can write freely, concentrating on their ideas without worrying about the conventions they should observe in more public writing. Students write their inferences, generalizations, their individual ways of making sense of the facts, their personal reactions, the connections they make between the concepts and their own lives or previous knowledge, their applications, their evaluation, and any reservations or doubts they may have about the material (Simmons, 1983).

In mathematics, students might write word problems or explain a mathematical procedure in their own words. A sixth-grader wrote about square root:

Square root is like a question that asks, what number times itself will be the number under the square root sign (which is called a radical)? One thing to remember is that if a number has an odd number of zeros, it is not a perfect square.

Her teacher notes that both the analogy and the reminder to herself are good memory devices. He also comments that she is making notes, not taking notes, a crucial distinction in her thinking processes (Kennedy, 1985).

Many important learning and thinking operations occur in journal writing: summarizing, generalizing, critiquing, but, above all, making knowledge one's own by putting it in one's own words. The value of this writing for students' involvement in learning touches on all aspects of teaching and learning, as is summarized in **Figure 4.3**.

Teacher response to journals is crucial. Attention should be focused on the content of the writing, not the correctness of spelling and word usage. A grade can be given for the quantity of writing in the journal so that students can be given credit for conscientious involvement with it or, alternatively, for accuracy and extent of the ideas recorded in the journal. Respect should be given to expressions of personal opinion and feeling, and comments should be positive to encourage continued engagement with ideas in the journal.

Teachers will have many questions about how to integrate journal writing into their current teaching strategies and how to handle the practical management problems associated with journals. To assist teachers with these important questions, an experienced teacher who has used journals in his/her class can be invited to give a workshop that includes both practical considerations and reflection on the value of the journals for learning. Teachers should be encouraged to introduce journals into their teaching in a way that is comfortable for them, perhaps beginning with only one class or by limiting the use of journals to one open-ended journal entry at the end of two class sessions per week. Use of journals should be a voluntary effort on the part of the teacher. A few teachers' reporting their successes to other teachers is one of the best possible ways to introduce any new teaching strategy to a school.

Figure 4.3

The Value of Learning Logs

The Value Of Learning Logs For Students

1. The act of writing reinforces the concepts learned.
   – Imprints the mind and memory.

2. A log creates a visible, permanent record.
   – Handy for review.

3. A log allows students to interact personally with course material.

4. It engages students in these learning thinking operations:

observing	applying general to specific
recording	integrating new ideas with old
generalizing	interring
summarizing	critiquing, questioning

5. A log provides a nonthreatening beginning to writing.

6. It promotes writing fluency.

The Value Of Learning Logs For Instructors

1. Advantages of writing without the burden of correction.

2. Awareness of what students think, feel, and understand or fail to understand.

3. Vehicle of student-teacher communication that is comfortable, friendly.

From JoAn M. Simmons. The Shortest Distance to Learning: A Guidebook to Writing Across the Curriculum. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Community College District, 1983.

Content-Specific Writing Assignments

Not all content subject writing is informal. Many instructors create writing assignments specifically designed to focus on selected course objectives. For example, in **Figure 4.4** are two writing assignments designed for different objectives in secondary social studies. In the first assignment, students are required to develop an organizing idea for a set of facts on American history. The second assignment is more complex. Students are required to elaborate on an organizing idea based on very different audiences and then reflect on the different frame of reference each audience brings to the topic.

Faculties of different disciplines can use in-service time for collaborative planning of such assignments as these, then monitor the results and revise as needed. They should begin with only a few writing assignments to help ease the period of adjustment as they integrate new assignments into established teaching schedules.

Figure 4.4

Two Sample Writing Assignments in Secondary Social Studies

Writing Assignment #1

I. Set of information:

Know-Nothing Party
Foreign social clubs
Political ideals
Growth of Catholic Church
Mass migrations from southeastern Europe

II. Add three to five pieces of information to this list:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

III. State your organizing idea:

_____

_____

IV. Write a paragraph relating at least four pieces of information from I and II above with your stated organizing idea:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Writing Assignment #2

I. In three paragraphs, write your response to the following organizing idea about immigrants: The many immigrants who have come to the United States have made important contributions to the cultural richness of the country.

II. Rewrite your response, as directed below, addressing it to one of the following readers:

- A newspaper reporter who had supported the Ku Klux Klan.
- A priest in the Roman Catholic Church.
- A principal of an elite private school.
- A president of a large labor union.

First select a reader, and list a few of his/her possible attitudes toward your subject (even though you do not know the reader). Then write your new paragraph(s).

III. Repeat the same steps, and write to a second reader.

IV. Analyze your three statements, and describe the changes you made for each reader. What are the reasons for those changes?

From Henry A. Giroux, "Teaching Content and Thinking Through Writing." Social Education. March 1979 (p. 191).

Essay Exams

A set of facetious essay questions has been making the educational rounds for some time, recently appearing in Jack Smith's column in the *Los Angeles Times*. A sampling of questions includes:

History: Describe the history of the papacy from its origins to the present day, concentrating especially, but not exclusively, on its social, political, economic, religious, and philosophical aspects and impact on Europe, Asia, America, and Africa. Be brief, concise, and specific.

Philosophy: Sketch the development of human thought, and estimate its significance. Compare with developments of any other kinds of thought.

Biology: Create life. Estimate the differences in subsequent human culture if this form of life had been created 500 million years ago. Pay special attention to its probable effect on the English parliamentary system. Prove your thesis.

Physics: Explain the nature of matter. Include an evaluation of the impact of mathematics on science. (Simmons, 1982.)

We can enjoy the comic exaggeration of this set of essay questions, perhaps with a touch of nervousness as we recall our own experiences with essay exams. While these questions are exaggerations in that they demand impossible physical and intellectual tasks, they point to the difficulty of creating clear, focused questions that students can address in the limited time alloted to them.

Teachers can work together to practice writing focused questions that include evaluation criteria sufficiently detailed to guide both the students' writing and the instructor's evaluation. Sample essay examination questions using key verbs, such as in the list given in **Figure 4.5**, may be helpful as the teachers work together. Simmons also provides questions to guide designing essay questions:

Choice Of Task

1. Does the question test the students' understanding of significant course content?

2. Is the question sufficiently focused to allow the student to say something substantive in the time allowed?

3. Is the question the end point of a sequence of previous writing assignments or other preparation?

4. Does the question allow the student to synthesize learning, make new connections, or see the material in a new way?

Wording

1. Is the task clarified by exact use of terms such as trace, compare, explain, justify, etc.?

2. Are any steps in the writing task spelled out clearly?

3. Is there enough context given so that the student can immediately plan his/her answer without spending time figuring out the demands of the question?

4. Would it be appropriate or helpful to frame the question as a simulated professional problem?

Evaluation Criteria

1. Does the student know the relative worth of various questions or parts of questions so that he/she can apportion his/her time well?

2. Does the student know the criteria by which his/her answer will be graded?

Figure 4.5

Writing Good Essay Questions: Sample Statements for Frequently Used Directive Words

1. SUMMARIZE:	Sum up; give the main points briefly. Summarize the ways in which people preserve food.
2. EVALUATE:	Give the good points and the bad ones; appraise; give an opinion regarding the value of; talk over the advantages and limitations. Evaluate the contributions of teaching machines.
3. CONTRAST:	Bring out the points of difference. Contrast the novels of Jane Austen and William Makepeace Thackeray.
4. EXPLAIN:	Make clear; interpret; make plain; tell "how" to do; tell the meaning of. Explain how people can, at times, trigger a full scale rainstorm.
5. DESCRIBE:	Give an account of; tell about; give a word of. Describe the Pyramids of Giza.
6. DEFINE:	Give the meaning of a word or concept; place it in the class to which it belongs and set it off from other items in the same class. Define the term "archetype."
7. COMPARE:	Bring out points of similarity and points of difference. Compare the legislative branches of the state government and the national government.
8. DISCUSS:	Talk over; consider from various points of view; present the different sides of. Discuss the use of pesticides in controlling mosquitoes.
9. CRITICIZE:	State your opinion of the correctness or merits of an item or issue; criticism may approve or disapprove. Criticize the increasing use of alcohol.
10. JUSTIFY:	Show good reasons for; give your evidence; present facts to support your position. Justify the American entry into WorldWar II.
11. TRACE:	Follow the course of; follow the trial of; give a description of progress. Trace the development of television in school instruction.
12. INTERPRET:	Make plain; give the meaning of; give your thinking about; translate. Interpret the poetic line, "The sound of a cobweb snapping is the noise of my life."
13. PROVE:	Establish the truth of something by giving factual evidence or logical reasons. Prove that in a full-employment economy, a society can get more of one product only by giving up another product.
14. ILLUSTRATE:	Use a word picture, a diagram, a chart, or a concrete example to clarify a point. Illustrate the use of catapults in the amphibious warfare of Alexander.

From JoAn M. Simmons ed. The Shortest Distance to Learning: A Guidebook to Writing Across the Curriculum. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Community College District, 1983.

Steps In Integrating Writing Into Subject Areas

Integrating writing into content subject teaching is most easily accomplished gradually, with teachers taking the initiative in their own classrooms at each step. There is no one best way to include writing in the various subjects; each teacher can select the assignments and procedures that are best for his/her discipline and course of study. It is especially important for content-subject teachers, who are new to writing instruction, to choose the most comfortable place to begin.

As a first step in the change process, teachers – as a department or individually – should identify one area of instruction and one type of writing to use for a trial period. A civics teacher may want to create one essay question for one six-weeks exam, or a biology teacher may want to require students to keep journal entries during their preparation of a project for the science fair.

Change can take place in small steps, over several years of development. Before producing curriculum documents and policy mandates, it is wise for districts to allow time for teachers to develop understandings and skills that will be needed to implement the change. Some schools have involved the entire school faculty in an across-the-curriculum writing program, while others have concentrated on a single department that is interested in making changes.

Questions Teachers Ask About Writing In Content Subjects

How much writing are you talking about?

Only writing assignments that contribute to students' mastery of course content. Perhaps a journal that does not require teacher correction, one or two short papers with emphasis on clarity, accuracy, and organization of content, and one or two essay-test questions.

I'm not a qualified English teacher. How can I be expected to teach writing?

No one expects you to use your class time to teach syntax, grammar, or prose style. Nor are you expected to correct all errors in student writing. You can work with the English teacher, sharing responses to papers, or learn some simple techniques for responding to writing that teachers of any discipline can use. You can reinforce the importance of correctness but not correct or mark every error.

What if the students object, saying this is not an English class?

Remind your students that in the outside world, English is not separated from other disciplines. Writing is part of the equipment necessary to function well in the world. The ability to write a simple report or summary, to keep a chart or log, to write a memo, or to set forth a position and back it up is a part of college, trade, business, or professional life.

Why can't English teachers take care of all of this?

Writing is a complex skill that must be continually used – in all fields – in order for proficiency to be maintained or increased. If students write only in English class, their writing often regresses. Students who have not read much especially need enormous help with both reading and writing. Minority students who speak a nonstandard dialect and international students who have English as a second language need many opportunities to practice what they are learning in English classes.

What about students who can get an "A" on an objective test but can't write well? Won't they be penalized?

To maintain an "A," students should be able to spell key terms and write simple clear paragraphs about course content. The journal provides ungraded writing practice, and students can have the chance to revise their writing with help from the resource learning center before a final grade.

I can hardly cover my course material in the time I have now. How can I fit in writing?

You make the writing serve the course material. It is not something separate or additional. Students learn course material more thoroughly when they write. Writing will, however, take some class time. Students can write in their journals during the opening and ending moments of class, when you are busy taking roll, reorganizing materials, or talking to individual students. They can write drafts of their papers in class, and then discuss their drafts as part of a review or clarification of course material. Writing can be begun in class and finished as homework.

From JoAn M. Simmons, ed. The Shortest Distance to Learning: A Guidebook to Writing Across the Curriculum. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Community College District, 1983.

5: CONCLUSION

This handbook arises out of both demand and supply. Increasing demands to alter traditional approaches to teaching writing are being brought to bear on schools as holistic writing-sample test data reveal continuing deficiencies in student writing and as our culture requires higher levels of literate achievement. The years of neglect in the field of writing instruction place additional demands on schools: although teachers may have many courses in the teaching of reading, few of them have more than a cursory background in the teaching of writing. On the positive side, there is now available a vast array of highly useful resource material that has emerged from classrooms at all school levels where students are successfully learning the craft of writing. It is a good time for school development programs in writing instruction.

Writing was traditionally considered a skill that, at its most basic, was trivially easy to teach and, in its literate form, was a "high art" not to be expected of the ordinary student. Teachers assigned writing; teachers graded writing; and, if they were sensitive to the higher arts, they inspired the few students each year who displayed "talent." Exercises from the English book were assumed to be sufficient as an instructional approach; it was the students' own deficiencies that kept them from becoming capable writers. English teachers did not create this view of writing, of course. They were merely reflecting societal expectations. Aldous Huxley, one of the great writers of our century, expressed this exhalted position of writing in our culture when he called it "the highest art, one to which I aspire."

A more democratic cultural atmosphere and twenty years of classroom experimentation has broken down the traditional mystique of writing and allowed it to take its place as a "teachable" subject along with reading and mathematics. Donald Murray pioneered in identifying important characteristics of effective writing and devising activities for students that enabled them to develop capability as writers. Peter Elbow, in Writing Without Teachers, encouraged a refreshingly "grassroots" approach, stimulating students to experiment with ways to help each other with writing problems. The landmark classroom research of Donald Graves and his colleagues in the elementary school astonished the field with the sophisticated learning thet young authors could accomplish in an encouraging classroom environment.

By 1980, the geography of writing instruction had undergone revolutionary changes. There was an outpouring of classroom studies reporting the discoveries of teachers who created classroom communities of young authors. Published student work and test scores substantiated the contribution of the new approaches. Today's curriculum developers can reap the benefits of the pioneering work of the past decades. A curriculum committee ready to embark on a development project can expect with some confidence that resources will be available to support teachers in making instructional changes to improve student writing. Not just theoretical works, but detailed classroom reports, videotapes, demonstration classrooms, and in-service courses are readily available to provide convincing demonstrations of applied theory – not just a set of formulas, but applied theory that can operate hand-in-hand with concrete alternatives to solve practical problems.

The next decade of writing instruction improvement holds promise for continuing development of our understanding at a theoretical and a practical level. As teachers listen carefully to other teachers and as they internalize a sense of how the writing ability of children and adolescents can grow, they will continue to make their own discoveries. It has been rewarding for the author of this handbook to learn from the many teachers over the past years who have shared their inventive extensions of current theory and practice. Ramona listened for weeks to regular classroom teachers, then went back to her EMR class to put a message board on the wall, to designate an author's sharing chair, and to set aside a table for writers' conferences. Although outsiders could not read all their writing, the students could and did communicate with each other in what had previously been a "too demanding"

medium. Their behavior, self-management, and reading proficiency showed noticeable improvement. Betty courageously dared to take an entire class of "unmanageable" remedial seventh graders to the computer lab, believing that they would not destroy the expensive equipment. Soon they were working on task for the entire period, and some returned to the lab to revise and edit during lunch time.

Libby, who, even when she is not a mime, has a dramatic and artistic approach to life, organized a "literacy lock-up" with her energetic middle- school students. For this school slumber party, the students brought sleeping bags on Friday evening, watched the classic film "Wuthering Heights," and talked and wrote all through the night. Mark wanted to do more with his first-grade students who had begun to use the classroom computers and was concerned about a large group of boys who were not making progress in reading. After reading books by Jane Hansen and Lucy Calkins, he created a morning writing and reading workshop period that ended with "the group," a time for sharing and reflecting. During the fall, his first-grade authors wrote many books and exchanged them with a third-grade class in Ohio.

Teachers who never thought of themselves as writers are taking hold of writing for their own personal uses. The author has accumulated a rich treasury of South Carolina history through the personal memories of hundreds of South Carolina teachers in writing workshops. Although their stated purpose was to learn more about teaching students, they forged closer bonds among themselves as men and women as they wrote and shared their past lives and future dreams. Some of these teachers were always writers, and some continue to write for their own purposes. Sylvia revised a therapeutic outpouring written after her beloved father-in-law died. It will soon be published in a health-issues magazine. Margaret has started to write the history of her church, and Sherry gave informally bound family histories to her relatives as a memorable Christmas gift. In recognition of the importance of teacher's voices, the South Carolina Writing Project has recently published an anthology of their stories and poems, Rhythms, Reflections, and Lines on the Back of a Menu.

The growth of these teachers, as classroom instructors and as writers, was not just an individual or accidental happening. It came about as a result of well-planned staff development programs. Many hours of planning and administrative decision-making lie behind each of these improved classroom environments and individual achievements. Although it is the teacher and the student that create instruction, it is the larger school and district context that supports growth in the classroom.

The broad context of curriculum planning, staff development, and administrative decision making is what this handbook is about. It is hoped that the ideas included in this handbook will be helpful to school committees and administrators who wish to develop their school writing programs. The guidelines and activities are meant to be suggestive, to serve as springboards for the staff's own thinking. Some schools may find material that can be used just as presented; in most cases, ideas used elsewhere must be shaped to suit the circumstances and needs of the local site. In no case are the alternatives presented here meant to be exhaustive. Every attempt was made to include practical assistance based on the experience of a variety of school districts, large and small, rural and urban, within the limitations of appropriate publication length.

The approach taken in this handbook assumes that in most cases a development project will involve major changes in curriculum and instruction. It, therefore, describes a change process that continues over an extended period of time. The process includes time to build interest and "ownership" of the project among participants, time for participants to develop a shared vision of the achievements of the project, and time to acquire instructional expertise and to make adjustments in administrative structures. Not all development projects will encompass such extensive changes. For less ambitious projects, administrators can select from alternatives presented here those that are best-suited to their purposes.

Just as this publication is the result of the contributions of many school- district personnel, it is hoped that it will stimulate continued collaboration from practitioners who have undertaken or are in the process of undertaking program development projects. The readers are encouraged to communicate with the author and with the Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory about their experiences. It will assist further development of this handbook to receive feedback from users about the usefulness of the material included here. It is hoped also that users will communicate additional issues that are important to current practice and will share ideas and materials that have been useful in their programs.

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